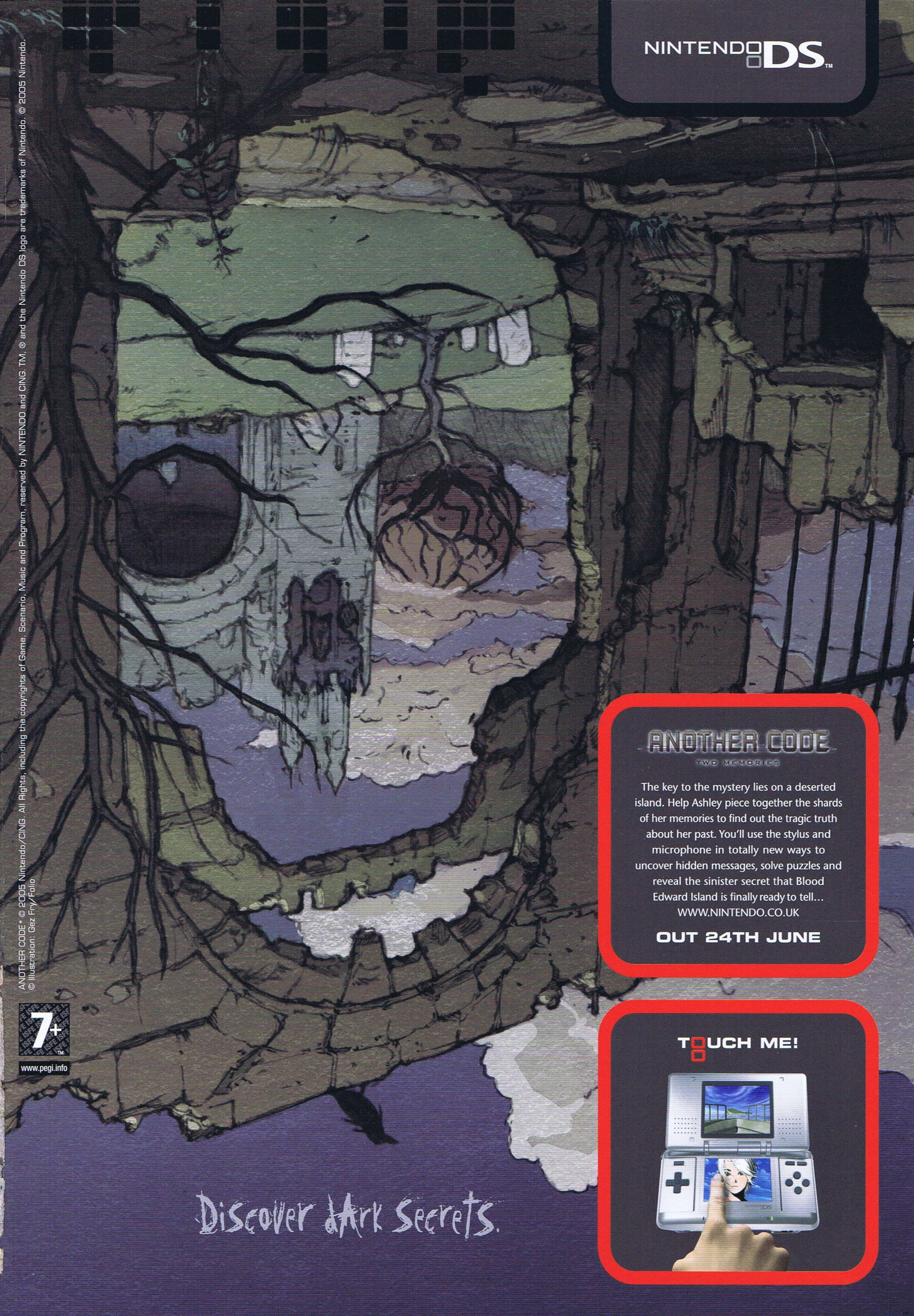

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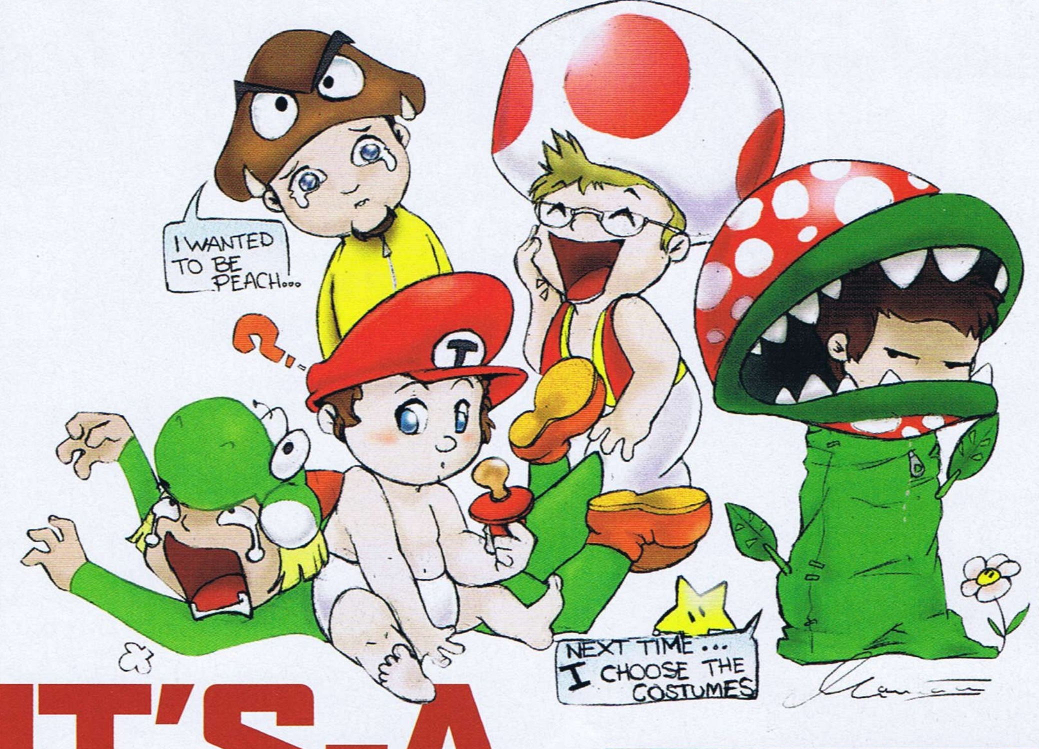
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IT'S-A MARIO DISCO

Okay, so it's summer. It's that time of year when the over forties pull their shorts up to nipple height, wear sandals with socks and balance baseball caps precariously on their heads. They also tell you that you should be outside playing tennis or something, rather than stuck indoors playing games. But we've got proof that games are good for you – in *Dance Dance Revolution Mario Mix*, there is a feature which shows you how many calories you've burnt while prancing around on the mat.

This issue, we continue our Mario season with the review of *Mario Mix*, the first of his eight new games due out this year. And if that's not enough our Mario love-in continues, as we chat to two of the chaps who have played the plumber down the years: Charles Martinet and Lou Albano.

Of course you can always go outside… And play on your handheld. And if you haven't already, we've found the best reason why you should buy a DS: *Advance Wars Dual Strike*.

TURN OVER THE PAGE!
Flick to page 52 for our review of Advance Wars: Dual Strike.



SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

Go to page 92 to find out how you can get **NGC** delivered direct to your door, before it hits the news stands. With a free copy of *Splinter Cell: PT* too.

WHY WE'RE No.1 FOR NINTENDO

NGC's the result of over a decade of gaming genius – so you're the best-informed Nintendo gamer around.



■ First there was the SNES, and Super Play came out alongside it – fanboys rejoiced.

■ A new machine meant a new magazine – but one with the same high standards.

■ Now we've got Gamecube, and you've got **NGC**. That's 13 years of Ninty love right there.

NGC'S
FIVE STAR
GUIDE TO WHAT'S **UNMISSABLE** THIS ISSUE!

1

PAGE 52

ADVANCE WARS DS
WAR: IT'S FANTASTIC
Welcome to the Battle of Dual Screen Ridge. Or something.



DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION MARIO MIX
TWINKLE TOES
Strut your stuff with the plumber.

PAGE 82

DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION MARIO MIX
Not mushroom on the dance floor as Mario takes on Bowser.





CHIBI ROBO

CUTE ROBOT CLEANS HOUSE

Finds unmentionable things behind sofa. Argument breaks out. Husband spends two weeks in spare room.



THE 50 GREATEST HANDHELD GAMES

THE HANDHELD HALL OF FAME

We played and played and played to bring you our guide to the best handheld games around.

WHAT'S IN NGC?

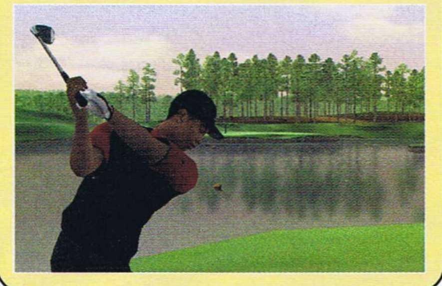
PREVIEWS

Amazing new games coming your way.









NEWS

The latest rumours, truths and goings-on.

OTHER STUFF

Things that simply defy categorisation.



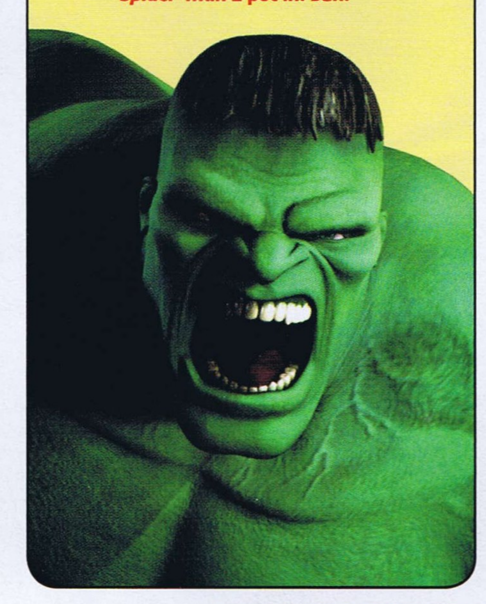


REVIEWS

Ways to blow your hard-earned cash.









OUR PROMISE

It's the news section! Every month we delay its completion for as long as possible to ensure that everything we stuff in here is as fresh as it can possibly be. Which basically means it's usually written at 2am when we're all wired on the rancid coffee out of the office vending machine. Honestly, you don't want to know the pain we go through for you guys…

IN NEWS THIS MONTH

It's all gone Pokémental

If by 'mental' you mean 'new details and screenshots'…

First the bad news. We're not going to be seeing the DS games, *Diamond* and *Pearl*, for some time – with our hopes for a late 2005 release being dashed in favour of a Japanese launch 'some time' in 2006. Not great – but hopefully the following details may cheer you up a bit.

First and foremost, the games will be WiFi enabled, with Nintendo hoping to get the game playable by up to 16 players at a time. The new adventure, it's been confirmed, will take place in a completely new land from the previous instalments in the game, away from Johto, Orre, Kanto and Hoenn. Pleasingly, any Pokémon you've been collecting, breeding and training in the GBA games will able to link to the DS game via the hardware's GBA slot, which will doubtless come as a relief for those of us who have spent an inordinate amount of time traipsing through the grass in *Ruby* and *Sapphire*.

As far as new Pokémon are concerned, it doesn't look like Nintendo are going to shoehorn another 100 critters into the package as they've done with their more recent instalments. They've already confirmed that there won't be any additions to the seventeen Poké-types currently available, although whether new Pokémon will be added to the existing classes is unclear. It seems far more likely that an expansion of Pokémon move sets and skills will feature – allowing you to customise your existing collection of Pokémon much more extensively.

> **"WHETHER NEW POKÉMON WILL BE ADDED IS UNCLEAR"**

Unfortunately though, details – and more importantly screenshots – indicating how it will look, and how the game will make use of the DS's unique features are nonexistent. Sadly, this looks like a situation that's unlikely to change any time soon…

NEW XD SHOTS

The countdown starts here...




Δ Familiar sights like the Poké Centre give a brief...

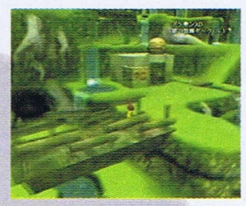

Δ ... respite from all the Shadow battles.

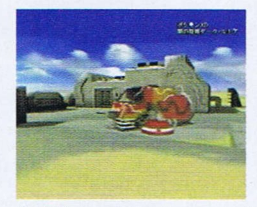

Δ Who's this lady? Chances are she's evil. Look at her!


Δ Those big eyes are clearly hiding mega-lasers of doom.

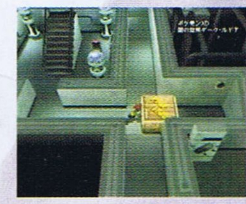

Δ Is it us, or does it remind you of Luigi's Mansion?

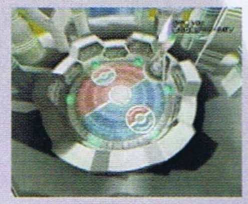

Δ And look! It's Gadd himself! Kind of. Well... no.

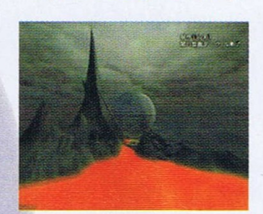

Δ Does this remind you of Agate? That's because it is.


Δ This van takes knackered Ponytas to the glue factory.


Δ Ooh! It's a rotating bridge puzzle. Rejoice.


Δ How about a spot of cutting-edge block puzzles?


Δ Some of the locations, like this huge stadium...

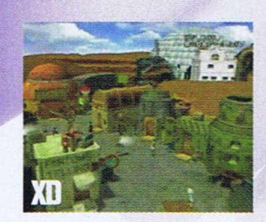

Δ ... and evil Lava lairs are a little more encouraging.


Here are some new Gamecube shots for your perusal, before we launch into our massive review next month.

Naturally we're looking forward to this a great deal. Aspects of it look great, and the sight of all-new environments to explore has us bubbling over with excitement – but there are a couple of things we've noticed which set alarm bells ringing in our heads. This is supposed to be a 'new' RPG, right? So why do some areas look so familiar? Why do we get the feeling that the Colosseum engine has been dragged out for another pass? Hmmm...

THE COMPARISON

Please, Lord, let it just be a coincidence...


XD


COLOSSEUM

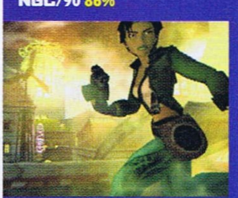

XD


COLOSSEUM


These screenshots clearly show Mt Battle and Pyrite Town from *Pokémon Colosseum* – both of which appear in *XD*. We also noticed both Agate Village and Phenac City, too. Now, we're not that averse to exploring the Orre region of the Pokémon universe again – far from it – but are we the only ones who feel that re-using locales from an RPG is just a little, well, cheap? Of course, we can't really criticise anything until we get the finished version of the game, but we'd be lying if we said we weren't just a little nervous about how it's all going to turn out...

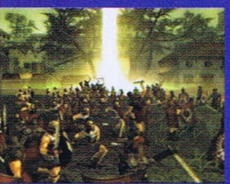
NOW PLAYING

TOM E
BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL
Ubisoft
NGC/90 86%



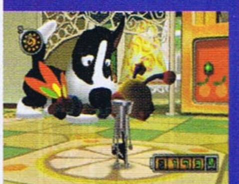
I found it languishing in a second-hand bin for the very reasonable price of £8.99, if you must know. It's easily one of the most engrossing and atmospheric games I've played in recent times – helping stave off those Zelda cravings for a couple of weeks.

MARTIN
SPARTAN: TOTAL WARRIOR
Sega
(Unfinished code)



Technically, this is shaping up to be brilliant – with loads of enemies on the screen and an amazing sense of scale. As to whether the relentless hacking and slashing will stay interesting for the entire game remains to be seen, though.

GERAINT
CHIBI ROBO
Nintendo
NGC/110 90%



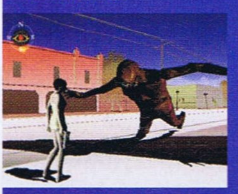
I knew this interested me, but I never imagined that it would be this enjoyable. It's so relaxing, and the overall presentation is so charming that it's definitely up there with *Pikmin* and *Animal Crossing* in terms of quality.

PAUL
1080° AVALANCHE
Nintendo
NGC/89 90%



Having completely destroyed *Burnout 2*, I decided to go back to my unfinished *1080°* save. As a pure racer it's really solid (though *Asphalt Urban GT* for DS edges it in my book) and has, in my opinion anyway, the best time trial modes of any game on Gamecube.

THE SIMPSON
KILLER 7
Capcom
NGC/109 84%



This game is driving me absolutely nuts. I really can't decide whether or not I actually *like* it, to be honest, but the story and the game's overall radness makes me want to see it through to the end – if only to find the secret BMX level that Geraint told me you get for finishing it.

RARE ON DS

Amazing, 200 words, and not a single mention of Golde...



A job advertisement for DS programmers on Rare's website last month indicated that they will be continuing their support for Nintendo's handhelds, despite having been bought by Microsoft.

Rare have already created new content for GBA since splitting from Nintendo – the quality of which has been inconsistent to say the least. At one end of the scale we have the very enjoyable (but not particularly brilliant) *Banjo-Kazooie Grunty's Revenge* and *Sabrewulf*, to the average *Banjo Pilot* and the quirky *It's Mr Pants*.

Some may argue that Rare haven't really been firing on all cylinders since *Perfect Dark* and *Conker's Bad Fur Day* towards the end of the N64's life-cycle, and later home console releases like *Star Fox Adventures* and *Grabbed by the Ghoulies* have not been particularly well received – despite being reasonably accomplished.

Still, the news is obviously well received, especially considering their prolific output of games on the N64, and no doubt the prospect of some of those being ported to DS will get you very excited. Whether or not we will actually *get* any ports remains to be seen – but the DS's similarities to the N64 (in terms of the power of the hardware) certainly suggests it's possible.



WOULDN'T IT BE NICE...

Working on the basis that eight-player WiFi *GoldenEye* (oops) or *Perfect Dark* deathmatches simply aren't going to happen, we wouldn't mind a bit of...



BLAST CORPS

Not the most technically demanding game, and the extra power of the DS could help give it a genuinely appealing make-over. Movement could, in theory at least, be translated well to the touch-screen and, maybe it's wishful thinking, but how about a spot of WiFi co-op?



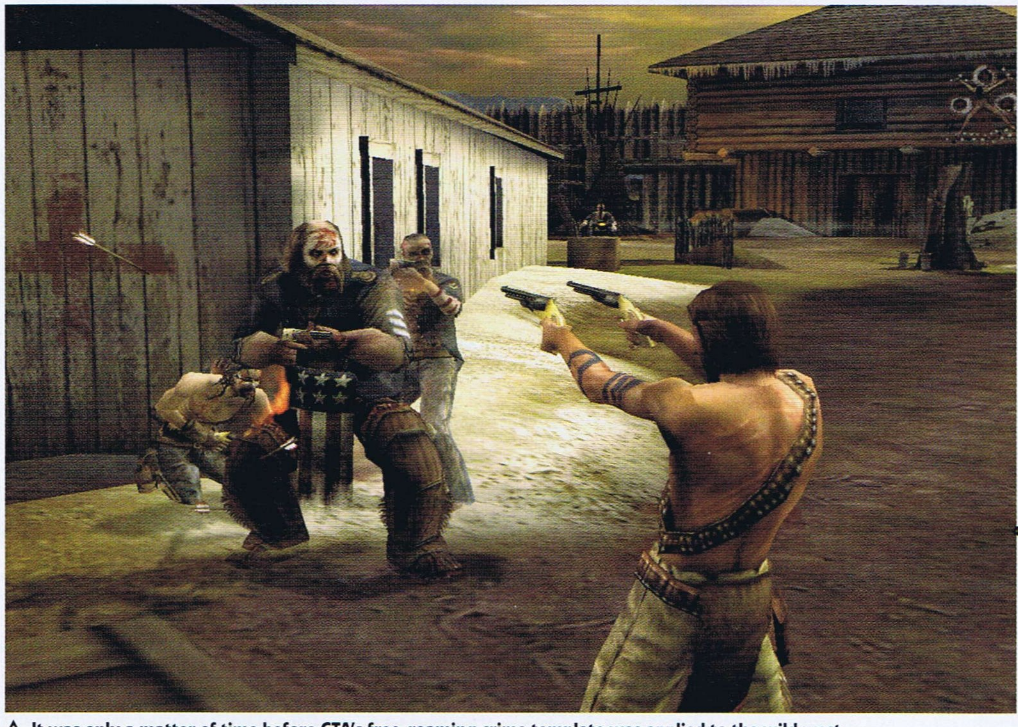
JET FORCE GEMINI

Another firm N64 favourite, even though that final Mizar boss battle made us all weep blood out of every orifice. The only problem we can see with a direct port is transferring the controls over to the DS, as analogue controls on the touch-screen on the vast majority of DS games tends to be... well, rubbish.

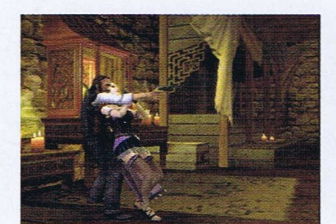


BANJO-KAZOOIE

The only platformer on the N64 (except for *DK64*, maybe) that ever got anywhere close to *Mario 64*'s sheer brilliance. Rare have already made an all-new GBA outing for the bird and bear double act, so we'd be very surprised if plans for a DS game aren't already on the table.



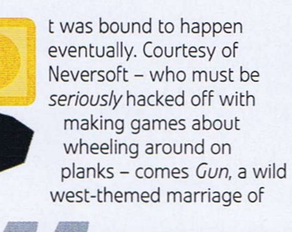
▲ It was only a matter of time before GTA's free-roaming crime template was applied to the wild west.



▲ The interior details are looking finely polished. Good stuff.

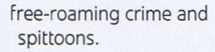
CAPITAL GUNISHMENT

Meet Gun: the gosh-darn root'n'ist toot'n'ist GTA clone in the west…



It was bound to happen eventually. Courtesy of Neversoft – who must be *seriously* hacked off with making games about wheeling around on planks – comes *Gun*, a wild west-themed marriage of free-roaming crime and spittoons.

> IT ALL SOUNDS PRETTY GOOD ON PAPER

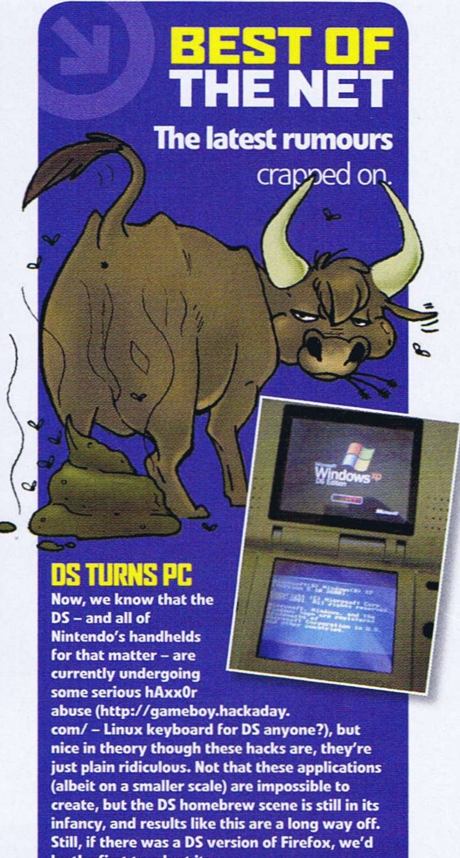


It all sounds pretty good on paper. You play the part of Colton White, a cowboy of sorts who's out to avenge his murdered father – a story that plays out across some expansive frontier territory. While revenge is the main objective, there's plenty of scope for exploration and secondary missions and quests. There are battles with rival gangs, you can hunt wild animals and, should you need to, you can interfere with (or rather, steal) other people's horses to get around faster. You can then visit towns, brothels and bars to seek out clues and extra missions and of course, if you want to, you can shoot the place up. Just because you feel like it.

As is always the case with these high-resolution shots, it looks like it's shaping up well with some nice detail in the natural environments, towns and building interiors. Of course, the strength of the game will lie in just how well the missions play out as well as how serious, or tongue-in-cheek, the atmosphere will be. We're hoping – judging by one bizarre shot of an Indian behind a Gatling gun – that it will be the latter…

BEST OF THE NET

The latest rumours crapped on.

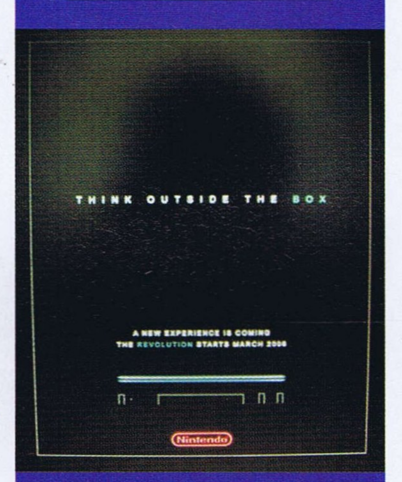


DS TURNS PC

Now, we know that the DS – and all of Nintendo's handhelds for that matter – are currently undergoing some serious hAxx0r abuse (http://gameboy.hackaday.com/ – Linux keyboard for DS anyone?), but nice in theory though these hacks are, they're just plain ridiculous. Not that these applications (albeit on a smaller scale) are impossible to create, but the DS homebrew scene is still in its infancy, and results like this are a long way off. Still, if there was a DS version of Firefox, we'd be the first to adopt it.

TURD 'O' METER



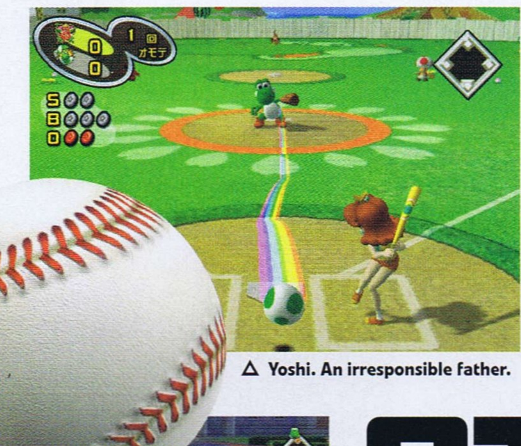


TEASER AD?

Now this we like – if only because it's classy and understated. The story goes that this comes from an 'unconfirmed source' (handy, that) from Nintendo's marketing department. Apparently it's part of a campaign set to run during the Xbox 360 launch, hence the 'Think outside the box' slogan. It also states a March 2006 release date, which is a nice idea, but is optimistic to say the least. Especially seeing as Iwata himself has hinted that Revolution will be released after PS3, which is currently scheduled for release in March.

TURD 'O' METER




△ Yoshi. An irresponsible father.


△ Yoshi prepares to take a Bullet Bill to the face. Painful.


△ Waluigi looks genuinely stunned by Peach's special love parps.

STEP UP TO THE PLATE

Get past first base with Peach…

Some brand new shots of *Mario Baseball*, a game that we're quietly tipping to be rather special. No, it doesn't even have a release date for the UK, but we don't really care – and neither should you if you've been wise enough to pick up a Freeloader. Maybe it's just us, but this has all the hallmarks of a classic Nintendo multiplayer game. Both Martin and Geraint have played this quite a bit now, and both of them simply won't shut up about it, claiming, with unusual confidence, that it will be 'teh RoXX0r.' We've got a full review of this for you next month – so we can find out just how right they really are.

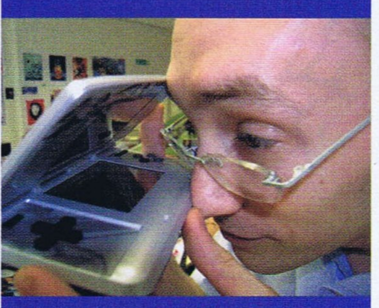


△ There are plenty of minigame diversions on offer, as you'd expect.



NINTENDO DIFFERENCE?

Magic moments that bring joy to our hearts…



NO. 1: ANOTHER CODE

Another Code is not without its problems: it only lasts a few evenings at the very most, and the fact that Ashley won't pick up any items until she needs them is both frustrating and restrictive, but there are a couple of moments in the game that really personify that inimitable Nintendo magic.

Two puzzles early on in the game use the DS's hardware in a most unusual way – requiring you to physically fold the machine in order to solve them. The first is pretty simple. The bottom screen has a piece of paper with a partial block-print image, while the top screen has the remaining blocks needed to complete the picture. Simply fold the DS and, hey presto, you manually print the rest of the image yourself. It's one of the best self-referential puzzles (with regards to the DS hardware itself) we've seen since Psycho Mantis's 'swap the controller ports' boss battle in *Metal Gear Solid*.

However, this interesting use of the DS is explored even further – this time with a hint of genius. One puzzle requires you to partially fold the DS so that when you look through the space between the two screens, you can see a reflection of the top screen superimposed over an image on the bottom screen. This completes a picture which gives vital information for completing the puzzle. Surely, this is one of the most fiendishly clever puzzles ever devised?

10 MINUTES WITH… HELLO KITTY

Spending quality time fiddling with kittens…

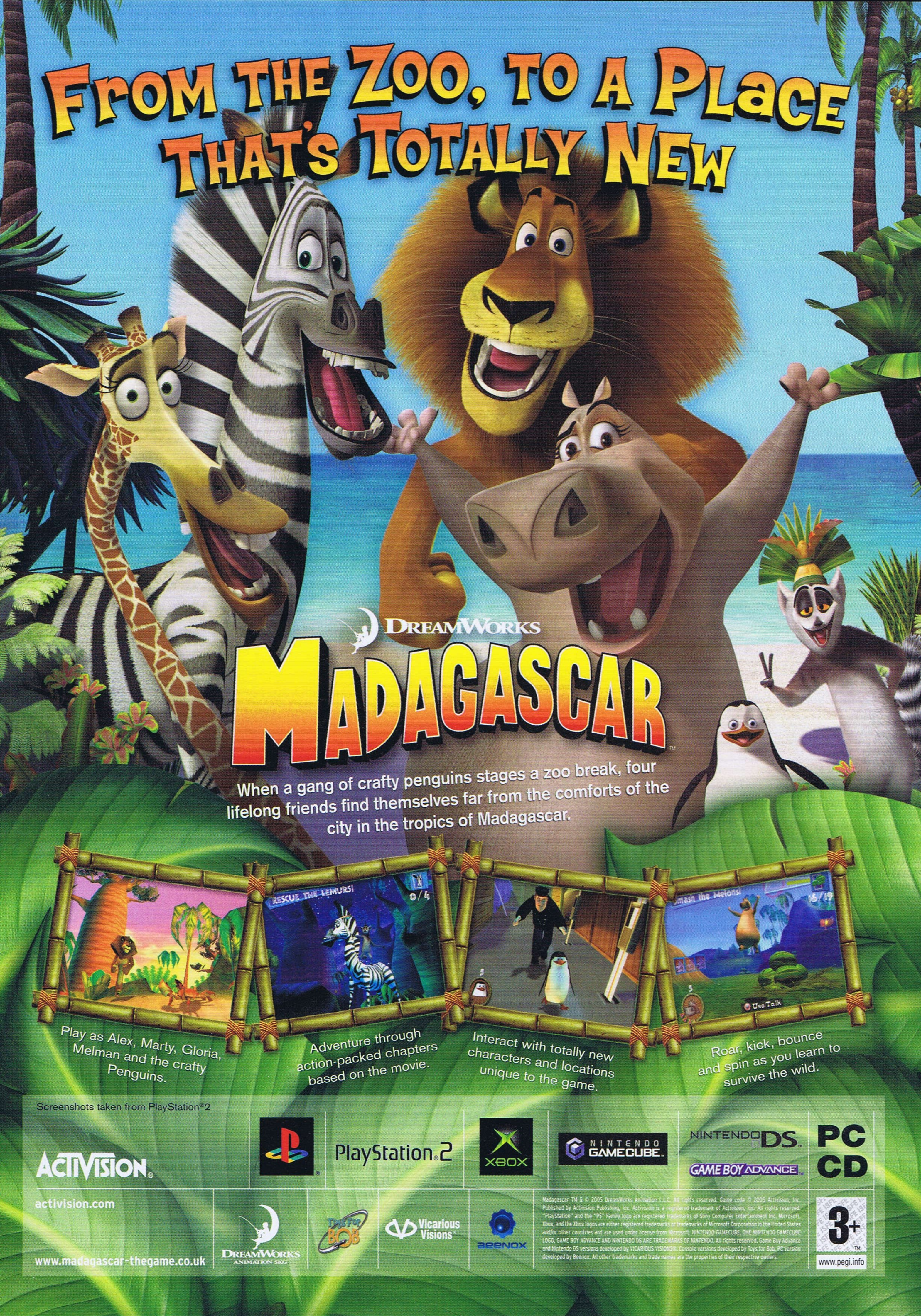


Hello Kitty: Roller Rescue, then. We admit that we didn't exactly take the game particularly seriously last time we looked at it, but we are looking forward to it… in a 'good present for your girlfriend' kind of way. No joke, it actually seems solidly designed and, of course, it's unnaturally cute. It's like *Mario Sunshine* with Hello Kitty. Okay, maybe not…

For our ten minutes with the game we rolled around Sanrio, leapt over picket fences and fought off enemies with our wand, defending houses in Kitty's village. According to Paul it makes him wish he was a girl.

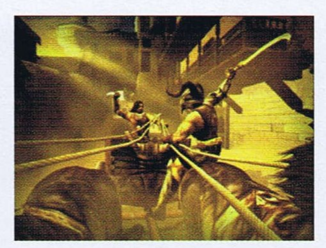



△ We have to admit, we were pleasantly surprised by the fact that this isn't awful.



FROM THE ZOO, TO A PLACE
THAT'S TOTALLY NEW
DREAMWORKS
MADAGASCAR
When a gang of crafty penguins stages a zoo break, four lifelong friends find themselves far from the comforts of the city in the tropics of Madagascar.
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3+
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One of the most impressive bosses since *Resident Evil 4*'s El Gigante.




One-hit stealth kills are possible.


The rooftop battles look superb.

PRINCE OF PERSIA 3

Putting right what went wrong…

If there's one thing that fills our hearts with a warmth usually reserved for pretty ladies, it's developers taking on board criticisms for poor design choices. Look at *Warrior Within* – it should, by rights, have been absolutely amazing, and what did Ubisoft do? Added a gravelly voice and facial hair, focused on combat and injected it with Rock. In short, turned one of our best-loved game characters into Paul. So it ended up a very good game, rather than a truly exceptional one.

It's not happening again though. Ubisoft have come to their senses and returned to a setting that's far more befitting the Prince – his ruined homeland of Babylon. However, rather than using the cavernous interiors of the previous games, the Prince will be treated to a wider range of locations. From claustrophobic streets to more organic settings like gardens and, even better, rooftop settings with a glorious sense of scale.

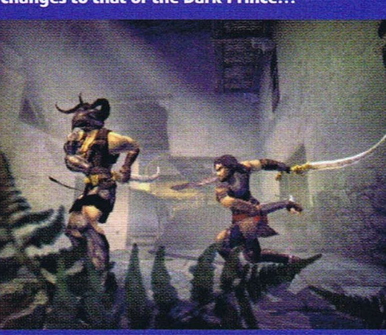
> PRINCE OF PERSIA 3 SEEMS TO BE CHERRY-PICKING THE BEST BITS FROM ITS PREQUELS

Prince of Persia 3 seems to be cherry-picking the best bits from both of its prequels. For example, the expanded combat of *Warrior Within* will make a comeback (albeit in a significantly refined form), and the more sinister tone will manifest itself in the Prince's alter ego, the Dark Prince.

There's much more in the way of characterisation as well, with more NPC conversations to overhear and more of *Sands of Time*'s narration and humour. Hopefully, we'll be able to have a closer look at this for you next month. Here's hoping.

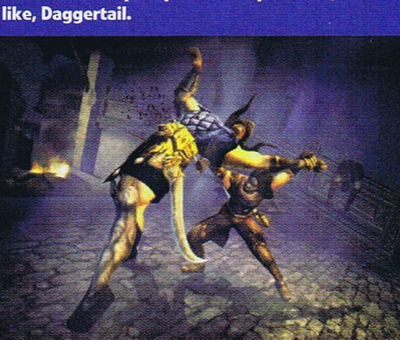
THE DARK SIDE

The prince faces his inner demons…



1. When the Prince gets into a crisis, or more specifically, encounters fire, his persona changes to that of the Dark Prince…

2. This changes the skills available to him as well as his weaponry – like the powerful, chain-like, Daggertail.



3. To change back into the normal Prince, players will have to seek out the water of life – the life-giving fluid from previous games.

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

It's got Connery in it. But do you care?


EA are sticking with the third-person perspective. We have to admit, it doesn't look the prettiest of games.



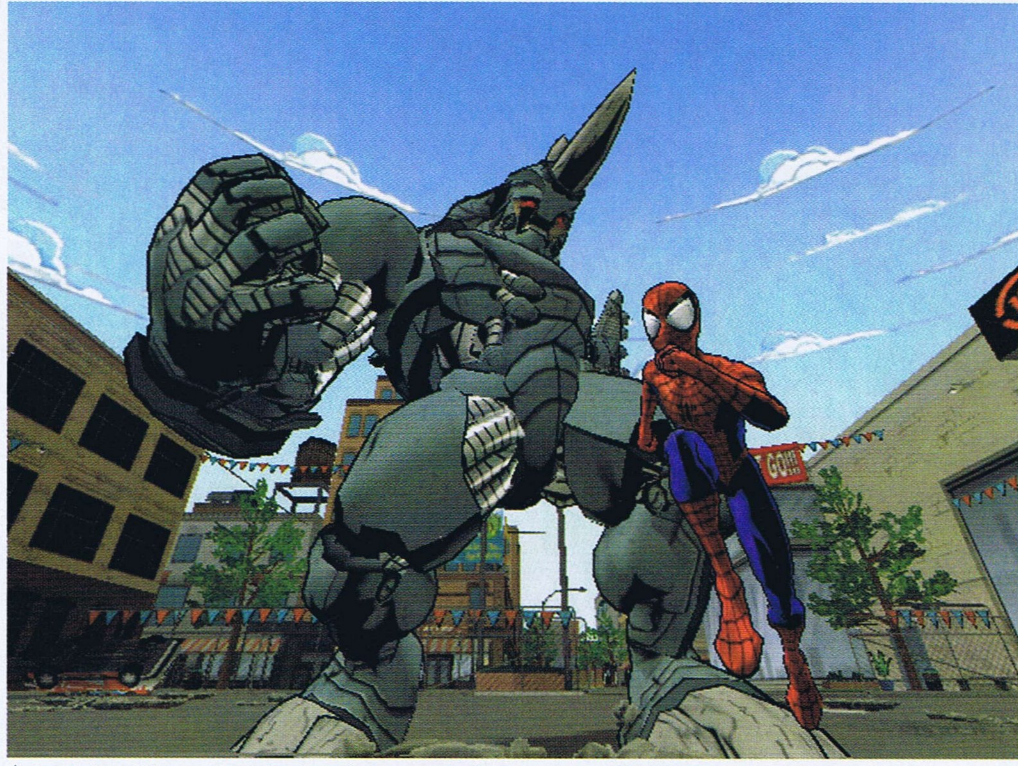
Well, we suppose that having both the likeness and voice of Sir Sean Connery is certainly *something* to look forward to (and a decent selling point), but we're not exactly holding our breath for this one. Sadly, this doesn't look destined to be anything other than painfully average.

You see, the basic structure of the game, especially the controls, is very similar to *Everything or Nothing;* a game we described as being 'fundamentally flawed'.

So can EA work a miracle and deliver a Bond game that lives up to the *GoldenEye* legacy? The jury's still out on that one…



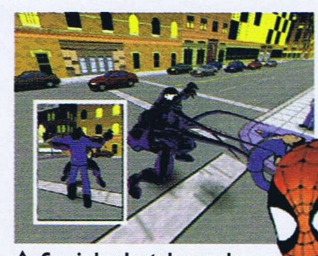
Connery's likeness is sure to appeal.



△ Just look at it. When cel-shading is applied appropriately, it can really add to the atmosphere of a game.

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

A title that's closer to the truth than you may think...



△ Comic book-style panels cut into the action stylishly.



We were going to leave this until next month, but after playing through *Hulk: Ultimate Destruction*, we decided to let you take another look – if only to see that there's a potentially much better alternative waiting in the wings.

It's basically an extension of *Spider-Man 2* – with a similar free-roaming, web-slinging structure, only this time, the presentation has taken a turn for the better. First off it's cel-shaded, although not just for the sake of it.

Ultimate Spider-Man is going all-out to create a really strong comic book feel – they've brought in Mark Bagley (arguably the best Spider-Man artist around) to help with character design, and throughout the game, plot details and incidental events take place through panels, tiers and cutaways that blend with the action (so there will be no jarring cutscenes this time around) along with the use of comic book conventions like lettered sound effects.

It looks stunning and will undoubtedly strengthen what was already the best super hero game in existence. Fortunately, the extra tweaks are not just limited to presentation, either. This may disappoint some, but developers Treyarch are actually making the city a little smaller this time. The pay-off is that it'll be tighter and more focused than before (*Spider-Man 2*'s city could feel a little empty and soulless at times), with more to experience per square mile. For example, heroic events (like saving someone from a burning building) are now more involving, with multiple events taking place simultaneously – requiring you to prioritise who you save first.

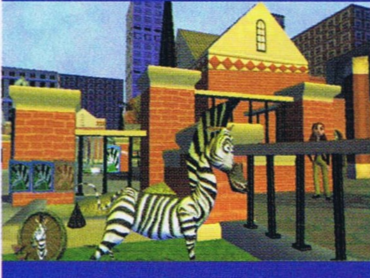
> **"FOR ONCE WE HAVE A COMIC BOOK LICENCE THAT'S VERY LIKELY TO IMPRESS"**

You'll also have the choice of two characters: Spidey and Venom, with the latter taking on a darker story line, bringing with him abilities more akin to The Hulk (like scaling buildings without the use of a web). So between the pair of them, they'll deliver very different experiences within the same city. We never thought we'd hear ourselves say this, but for once we have a comic book licence that's likely to impress.

NGC SAYS...

Geraint Evans on the pros and cons of kiddy games.





As a rule, target audience is rarely a factor when we form our opinion of a game. Quality comes first – a technically poor game (ropey camera, unfocused level design, shocking framerate) is poor no matter who it's meant for. Sure, younger players, may forgive minor presentational niggles or a sloppy camera, but banking on a player's tolerance for sub-standard games because of their age or experience is unacceptable. In fact it's downright dangerous.

Take *Madagascar*. If we were five years old, there's a very good chance that we'd have *some* fun with it. It's a reasonably competent game – at least in so far as it's not *broken* – but it's clear that there's not been a huge effort to make it look beautiful or offer anything particularly rewarding. It's 'just meant for kids', so why bother offering to put in the effort in the first place, right?

UNREWARDING

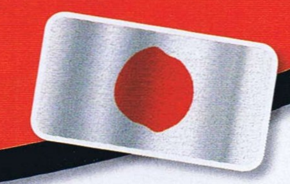
Over the years, we've seen hundreds of games like this across all formats, many of which have out-sold superior titles. It worries us to think there are people being reared on a diet of *Scorpion King* and *Beyblade*. What are we teaching them about games as a medium? That they're shabby and unimaginative? Bland and unrewarding? How many of those will continue to be active gamers, or see gaming as a worthwhile pastime?

UNCOMPROMISING

People still bemoan Nintendo's decidedly 'kiddy' output, but in our eyes it's an approach that should be applauded – and one that, ironically, shows unique maturity. They create software that, while 'young-looking', is universal in its appeal. They can be picked up and played by all ages, they have sufficient depth to reward each age group and, most importantly, are uncompromising in terms of their production values. These are the kind of games that have kept us enchanted for twenty years, and will hopefully safeguard the interest of future generations of gamers. A case in point? Try *Chibi Robo* on page 88.

ニュースデスク
Live from Kyoto

PLAYED IN JAPAN



Live from NGC's Kyoto office, it's our new, monthly Nintendo report…

IMPORT NOW!

We bring you the very best of the recent, more obscure, releases from Japan…



Flying ships play a big part in *Homeland*. We do like flying ships…

Gundam has an enormous following worldwide – they won't be disappointed.

Goes to show how versatile the DS is.

See those? Those are food molecules, they are. Now warm them up.

HOMELAND (GC)

Animal Forest online would be a pretty awesome prospect, but for now we'll have to make do with this offering from renowned Japanese RPG developer, Chunsoft. *Homeland* is an MMORPG along the lines of *Phantasy Star Online*, with tons of team-based quests. Your character is a quirky animal/human/monster (depending on your preference) and you have to battle and explore through the bizarre game universe. The best thing about *Homeland* is that you can team up with other odd characters via the Cube's broadband adapter. There aren't many online GC games, but, thanks to the game's unique atmosphere, this is probably the most enjoyable yet.

SD GUNDAM G GENERATIONS (DS)

Gundam Generations is an engrossing strategy RPG set mostly in outer space. The main tasks here are battles between squads of flying robots, item collection and levelling-up your characters. Your team of mechs and their inventories can both be taken care of using the touch-screen, while the action plays out on the main display. There are a couple of hundred different enemies to face and over 1000 timed events to play through. After *Advance Wars*, now strategy fans have another huge DS game to play through, and Gundam fans will be impressed with the authenticity.

OTONA NO DS TRAINING (DS)

This is a hugely popular game right now, and for good reason: it's a real head-scratcher. The game is based on a vast number of general knowledge questions posed by a professor of Japan's Touhoku University. The DS is held like a book, displaying the screens vertically, and answers can be inputted using the stylus. Of course, the whole thing is in Japanese. If you can read Japanese, though, this is an unusual and challenging piece of software that will make you really clever.

NO NO NO PUZZLE (GBA)



Tonkatsu is a delicious meal of chicken and shredded cabbage. *No No No Puzzle* is a game of this famous meal and other Japanese delicacies. You control heat molecules in the confines of a microwave and your task is to heat up ready meals before the timer dings. The game has other features, too, including a mathematics mode in which you have to line up numbered beans and do sums, and a track-laying game, in which you guide an onion-headed character across a perilous, changeable bridge. This is a very quirky game, but it's simple and addictive and it looks very nice indeed.

A ROUGH GUIDE TO… DORAEMON

Japan's most popular cartoon. Heard of it? Thought not.

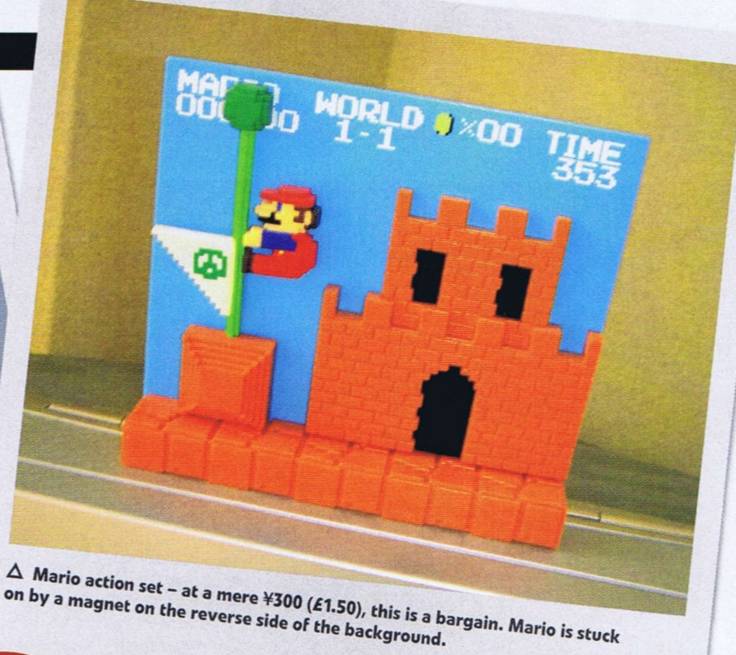
A blue robotic cat is one of Japan's most famous characters. His name is Doraemon. He has an infinite pocket (which we could do with) and can travel through time. The Japanese public watch his antics on the Asahi TV station every week.

The games of the cartoons are developed by Epoch, and they've been around since the 8-bit years of Nintendo's Famicom and the PC Engine. Four Super Famicom platformers followed, and three 3D platformers appeared on the N64. All sorts of curious Doraemon games turned up on the Game Boy, including quizzes, 'edutainment' (please, no) and Mario Kart rip-offs.

The best place to start with Doraemon, however, is on the Gamecube. The sole GC Doraemon release, (*Doraemon: Minna de Asobou*, released in 2003) is a very polished 3D platformer with some cool flying sections and a load of power-ups, stored in Doraemon's endless pocket. With the addition of four-player party games (typical racing/fighting fare), all presented in Doraemon's super-cute blue-cat style, this is, quite possibly, what the Freeloader was made for. Check it out.



△ Manufacturer and drinks supplier, Dydo, recently had a special campaign whereby soft drink swiggers could win videogame memorabilia.



△ Mario action set – at a mere ¥300 (£1.50), this is a bargain. Mario is stuck on by a magnet on the reverse side of the background.

SNAPSHOT

Nintendo are taking over the streets… And football stadiums.

Videogames are a huge part of Japanese culture. And you don't have to look very far to find evidence of Nintendo's impact on the country. Mario and Pikachu regularly appear in marketing campaigns for drinks and snacks, Pokémon anime is never off the box, and posters of forthcoming NCL games are pinned up in subways and trains across Japan. Here are a few of the cool Nintendo things we've found recently while wandering around the streets (and football stadiums!) of Kyoto.



△ Football team, Kyoto Purple Sanga are the Japanese equivalent of Southampton. But they're sponsored by Nintendo.

EVERYONE'S PLAYING…

NINTENDOGS

What's adorable, has four legs and a tail?

Already, over 400,000 copies of *Nintendogs* have been given loving homes all over the world – the RSPCA would be proud. The games, released in three cuter-than-cute varieties, have been a big hit with women who can't afford (or don't have the time for) a real pup. In Japan, people can hire dogs for a couple of hours at a time and take them for a walk.

Unfortunately, one session of dog borrowing can be as expensive as a brand new DS together with a copy of Nintendogs. Many Japanese women have realised that, and, having seen the excellent TV ads which feature women fawning over their virtual pups, they've done the only sensible thing.

You probably won't see many dogs being walked on the streets of Japan, but you will see loads *Nintendogs* players producing a DS from their incredibly expensive Louis Vuitton handbags when the train leaves the station. All hail the genius of Nintendo.



RED DS

To coincide with the release of *Jump Superstars* on the DS, a new, bright red version of the console will appear in Japan on August 8th. The red DS comes with a dark grey stylus, unlike the pale grey stylus which is included with the white and pink DS consoles. Really, it's the perfect console for Man Utd fans.

ULTRA RELEASE LIST

The latest on every Nintendo system game in development – updated monthly!

UK RELEASES

The most accurate listing available – but slippages can occur. We're not psychic, goddamit. All titles Gamecube unless stated otherwise.

AUGUST

26	The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction	Vivendi
29	Dynasty Warriors Advance (GBA)	Nintendo

SEPTEMBER

1	NGC out today!	
6	Cinderella: The Game (GBA)	Buena Vista
6	Lizzie McGuire 3 (GBA)	Buena Vista
6	That's So Raven 2 (GBA)	Buena Vista
9	Hello Kitty Roller Rescue	Namco
15	Scurge: Hive	Orbital Media
30	Advance Wars: Dual Strike (DS)	Nintendo
30	Spartan: Total Warrior	Sega
TBC	Namco Museum 50th Anniversary	Namco
TBC	Lost in Blue (DS)	Konami
TBC	Scooby-Doo! Unmasked	THQ
TBC	Scooby-Doo! Unmasked (GBA)	THQ
TBC	Scooby-Doo! Unmasked (DS)	THQ
TBC	Sky Dancers (GBA)	Crave
TBC	SR Monkey Team	
	Hyperforce Go! (GBA)	Buena Vista
TBC	Ultimate Arcade Games (GBA)	Telegames
TBC	Ultimate Card Games (DS)	Telegames
TBC	Ultimate Pocket Games (GBA)	Telegames
TBC	Ultimate Spider-Man	Activision
TBC	Ultimate Spider-Man (DS)	Activision
TBC	Ultimate Spider-Man (GBA)	Activision
TBC	W.I.T.C.H. (GBA)	Buena Vista
TBC	WWE Day of Reckoning 2	THQ

OCTOBER

Backyard Skateboarding (GBA)	Atari
Call of Duty 2: The Big Red One	Activision
Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow (DS)	Konami
Dancing Stage Mario Mix	Nintendo
Danny Phantom: The Ultimate Enemy (GBA)	THQ
Fire Emblem: The Sacred Stones (GBA)	Nintendo
Geist	Nintendo
Guilty Gear: Dust Strikers (DS)	Majesco
Lunar Genesis (DS)	Ubisoft
Metroid Prime: Hunters (DS)	Nintendo
Nintendogs	Nintendo
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney (DS)	Capcom
Pokémon Emerald (GBA)	Nintendo
Shogun Warrior: The Lost Army	Namco
Spyro Shadow Legacy	Vivendi
Tak: The Great Juju Challenge (DS)	THQ
Teen Titans	Majesco
Teen Titans (DS)	Majesco
Ultimate Puzzle Games (GBA)	Telegames
X-Men Legends 2	Activision
Yu-Gi-Oh! Nightmare Troubadour (DS)	Konami
Zatch Bell	Bandai
Zoo Tycoon (DS)	THQ

NOVEMBER

A Boy and His Blob (DS)	Majesco
Animal Crossing (DS)	Nintendo
Atomic Betty (GBA)	Namco
Crash Tag Team Racing	Vivendi
Crash Tag Team Racing (DS)	Vivendi
Fire Emblem: Path of Radiance	Nintendo
Gunstar Super Heroes (GBA)	Sega
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	EA
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (DS)	EA
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (GBA)	EA
Harvest Moon DS	Nintendo
The Incredibles: Rise of the Underminer	THQ
The Incredibles: Rise of the Underminer (DS)	THQ
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	Nintendo
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe	Buena Vista
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (GBA)	Buena Vista
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (DS)	Buena Vista
Mario Kart (DS)	Nintendo
Mario Party 7	Nintendo
Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects	EA
Midway Arcade Treasures 3	Midway
The Movies	Activision
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	EA
Need For Speed: Most Wanted (DS)	EA
Pac-Man World 3	Namco
Peter Jackson's King Kong	Ubisoft
Peter Jackson's King Kong (GBA)	Ubisoft
Peter Jackson's King Kong (DS)	Ubisoft
Pokémon XD: Gale of Darkness	Nintendo
Prince of Persia: Warrior Within (DS)	Ubisoft
Prince of Persia 3: Kindred Blades	Ubisoft
Prince of Persia 3: Kindred Blades (GBA)	Ubisoft
The Proud Family (working title) (GBA)	Buena Vista
Real Time Conflict: Shogun Empires	Namco
Shrek SuperSlam	Activision
Shrek SuperSlam (DS)	Activision
Shrek SuperSlam (GBA)	Activision
Starcraft: Ghost	Vivendi
Kirby Canvas Curse	Nintendo
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3 Mutant Nightmare	Konami
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3 Mutant Nightmare (GBA)	Konami
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2006	EA
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter	Ubisoft
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 4: Lockdown	Ubisoft
Tony Hawk's American Wasteland	Activision
Tony Hawk's American Wasteland (DS)	Activision
True Crime 2	Activision

TBC 2005

Age of Empires: Age of Kings (DS)	Majesco
ATV: Quad Fury 2 (DS)	Majesco
Battalion Wars	Nintendo
Bratz Rock Angelz	THQ
Bratz Rock Angelz (GBA)	THQ
Bubble Bobble Revolution (DS)	Rising Star
Bust-A-Move (DS)	Majesco
Dora the Explorer: Superstar Adventures (GBA)	Take-Two
Dragon Booster (DS)	Konami
EverGirl (GBA)	THQ
Frogger: Ancient Shadow	Konami
Frogger: Helmet Chaos (DS)	Konami
Kim Possible: Kimmunicator	Nintendo
Lunar Genesis (DS)	Ubisoft
Mario Baseball	Nintendo
Mario & Luigi 2 (DS)	Nintendo
Metroid Pinball (DS)	Nintendo
Nicktoons (working title) (DS)	THQ
Odama	Nintendo
Rayman Arena	Ubisoft
Snowboard Kids DS	Atlus
Space Channel 5: Ulala's Cosmic Attack (GBA)	Sega
SpongeBob and Friends: Unite! (DS)	THQ
Super Mario Bros. (DS)	Nintendo
SSX On Tour	EA
Total Club Manager 2005	EA
Trauma Center: Under the Knife	Atlus
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger 3	Activision
Winx Club	Konami

YOUR MOST WANTED

Which games are you most looking forward to? Scribble them on this form, send it to us and you'll be entered in a prize draw to win a copy of *Batman Begins*.

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

Name ....

Address ....

Postcode ....

Send your entries to Your Most Wanted, **NGC** magazine, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW

NGC MOST WANTED

The games we're dreaming about (and in some cases, playing)...



1 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA NINTENDO
This doesn't really need an introduction does it? It's the only game in living memory that has made grown men weep right before our very eyes. So it has to be good.
IN A NUTSHELL: It's like a bigger, prettier *Ocarina of Time*.

2 GEIST NINTENDO
First person shooters are a rare breed on Gamecube, and after playing the E3 demo, it's safe to say that this will fill the void nicely. Even if the textures are rubbish.
IN A NUTSHELL: An FPS with an intriguing story and ghost-based jiggery-pokery.

3 MARIO KART NINTENDO
We played it last month and the verdict is that it's near perfect. It's even got a whole cup dedicated to retro tracks from past games.
IN A NUTSHELL: Drive Mario and friends around in karts, shooting Koopa shells.

4 NEW ENTRY ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN NINTENDO
Activision's follow-up to the acclaimed *Spider-Man 2* movie tie-in. The last one was great fun, but what about this one?
IN A NUTSHELL: The follow-up to the first game that made us feel like superheroes.

5 NEW ENTRY MARIO AND LUIGI 2 NINTENDO
Mario RPG on the DS, in which Mario and Luigi go back in time to rescue Peach and come across baby verions of themselves.
IN A NUTSHELL: The plot sounds crazy, and the last one was ace.



MARVEL
RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT
XBOX
SIERRA
NINTENDO GAMECUBE
hulkgames.com
marvel.com
PlayStation 2

TIMEWARP



With Mark Green

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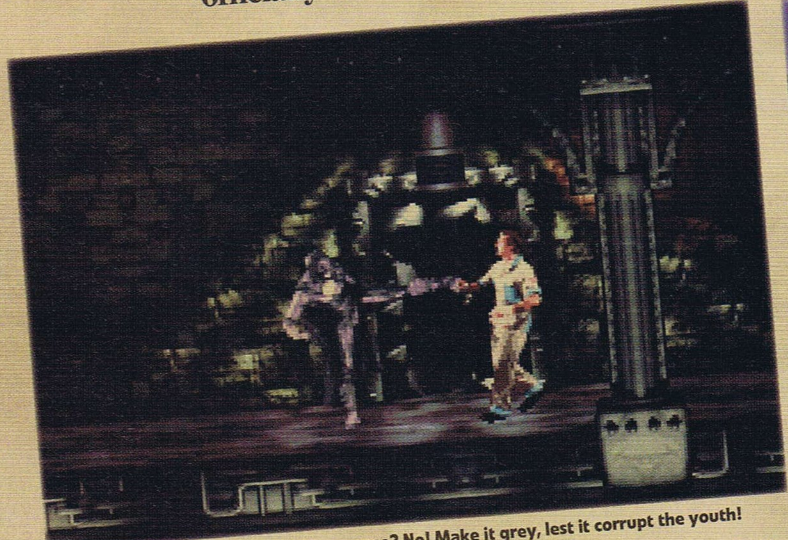
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THE FAMILY TREE

The sordid history of today's bestest games

Super Nintendo Heroes

Batman, Spider-Man, The Incredible Hulk, Mr Fantastic: superheroes are officially back, but where have they been all this time?



△ *Batman Forever* – red blood? In a game? No! Make it grey, lest it corrupt the youth!



△ *Spider-Man: Return of the Sinister Six.* Note the presence of the red cave-woman.

SUPERMAN (1988, NES)

'Clark, strange things are going on in Metro Park!' says Lois Lane, wearing what looks like a Robin Hood costume, standing in a newspaper office tall enough to comfortably hold planet Krypton – and yet equipped with just eight desks and two telephones.

So begins *Superman*, which looks for all the world like it started off as something completely different – *Go!! Go!! Absurd Big-Head Hyper Mission*, or something – before developers Kemco were forced to shoehorn in the Superman licence. Telephone boxes as tall as office buildings, Clark Kent dwarfed by his own head, townsfolk with conversation openers like 'The Upbeat is best of all the discos, isn't it?' – something clearly isn't right.

And the game? An action-free adventure with nothing to do except punch goon after goon. They got the leaping tall buildings bit right, but Superman's other 'powers' are mystifying – flying eleven screens straight up and dropping back down doesn't like an effective crime-fighting technique. Still, the good news is that Kemco cured Supe's long-standing Kryptonite troubles – they invented blue Kryptonite, which *restores* health. Sorted.

THE PUNISHER (1990, NES)

Comic book vigilante The Punisher subjects wandering criminal types to a bit of punishment. Includes a final boss whose "massive body can withstand the impact of bullets." But not fists, oddly.

SPIDER-MAN: RETURN OF THE SINISTER SIX (1992, NES)

The shameful past of Rogue Ops game-factory, Bits Studios. This amusingly ugly adventure had a stumpy little Spidey scampering around building sites and punching what looked like deformed cave-women. *Exploding* deformed cave-women, no less.

X-MEN: MUTANT APOCALYPSE (1994, SNES)

Developers Capcom spat out the 134th in the long line of scrolling beat-'em-ups. *Mutant Apocalypse* had a decent comic book feel and action in spades. A fighting lady's buttocks took centre stage.

BATMAN FOREVER (1995, SNES)

Laughable beat-'em-up in which a ninja-kicking Batman and Robin – *wielding a stick* – spend half their time slapping asylum inmates, and the other half waiting for levels to load. Gushing with Nintendo's infamous 'grey blood.'

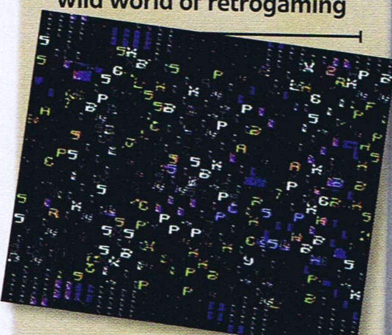
SUPERMAN 64 (1999, NINTENDO 64)

Legendary turkey from the wonderful Titus. Lex Luthor invited Superman to 'Solve My Maze' – a series of floating rings in a city made mostly of fog. Later, you could enjoy inexplicably sinking through the floor and banging into walls in cardboard caverns. Console poison.

Gaming Family Trees, A Definitive Guide 1003

RETRO NEWS

News rounded up from the wild world of retrogaming



GLITCH AND FAMOUS

The new trend in retro-related art seems to be this – messing about with the insides of NES cartridges and recording the results. Brent Gustafson fished the data out and presented it visually – giving you something that looks like a NES cart has been has been sick all over your screen. Meanwhile, Johnny Rogers has been casually documenting the glitch transmissions his NES produces since 2001.

■ http://rhizome.org/object.rhiz?31786 and http://assembler.org/romc/



PAC-MAN, OLD MAN

The yellow blob that made gaming a national pastime (and who was originally called 'Puck Man' before someone started worrying about vandals with black markers) celebrated his 25th birthday back in June and chomped his way into the record books, too. Between 1980 and 1987, Namco sold over 293,000 copies of the original coin-op (and off-shoots like *Ms Pac-Man*) to arcade machines, pubs and bowling alleys, making *Pac-Man* Guinness's official 'most successful coin-operated game' in history.



MARIO MUSIC

Musical tributes to Nintendo themes of yore tend to be too literal, too computery, or just too thrash metal to listen to without your ears having a good old moan. So it's a treat to hear Koji Kondo's finest compositions done, well, *nicely*. Xoc uses drums, bass, guitars, banjo, xylophone, accordion, synths, melodica, etc and, in a crossover we couldn't have planned better, barks his way through Lou Albano's 'lyrics' from the Super Mario Bros Super Show – the very show we've picked at on page 36. Have a listen and see if your ears can spot the melody in there.

■ http://www.archive.org/search.php?query=xoc%20mario

NET TENDO

BLOCK PARTY

Short of hiding a mushroom in a box and eating it later, it's not exactly easy to recreate the blocky world of *Super Mario Bros.* in real life. But a man who goes by the mysterious name of 'Posterchild' (not his real name) has brought Shigeru Miyamoto's mindmadness one step closer to reality by sprinkling cardboard *Super Mario Bros. 1*-era question mark blocks around his hometown in Ontario, Canada. And here's the really good bit – *they actually have items inside*, including cardboard mushrooms. Which, admittedly, are much less likely to have you growing to twice your normal size than vomiting pieces of half-digested paper onto the pavement in front of you.

■ www.qwantz.com/posterchild



NANO NES

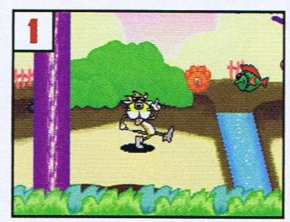
There was only one way to go for American TV videogames channel G4TV after they made the biggest NES controller in the world – making the *smallest* NES controller in the world. It's about the size of a 10p piece, and you can make one yourself, although we advise steering well clear of anything that involves ferric chloride acid (which will easily eat through skin and eyeballs). You'll probably get your chance to experience the humour of very small buttons with the Game Boy Micro, anyway.

■ www.g4tv.com



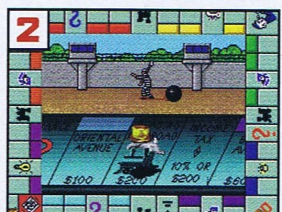
5 THINGS

Licences they simply shouldn't have bought.



1 CHESTER

Yes, it's the cheetah off the front of packets of Cheetos, America's favourite cheesy snack, in his own Super Nintendo game called *Chester Cheeto's Adventure*. This was as tedious a platformer as they come, but it wasn't quite as uninspiring as the title of the sequel: *Wild Wild Quest*.



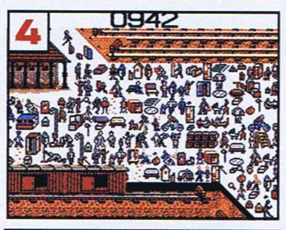
2 MONOPOLY

You can try to jazz it up with animated bunnies and CPU players with 'personality' all you like, but scientists have proved that a board game is always going to lose exactly 99.75% of its appeal during the transition from its box to the cold vacuum that is the inside of your telly.



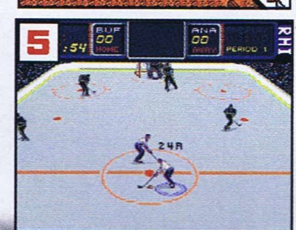
3 CRASH TEST DUMMIES

This is not actually that bad an idea – unless, that is, you throw away the prospects of a Burnout-style crash-terpiece on wheels, and turn the whole thing into a platformer instead. And patronisingly remind people to 'buckle up!'



4 WHERE'S WALLY?

There is a fundamental flaw in the idea of a Where's Wally game. Who wants to be basking in evil TV-rays by squashing their nose up against the TV, and squinting to make out the handful of pixels that supposedly distinguish Wally from the rest of the blobs on-screen?



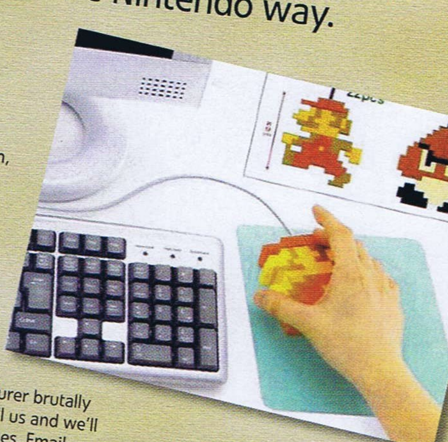
5 ROLLER HOCKEY

Yes, it's hockey on rollerskates, officially licensed from RHI (that's Roller Hockey International). It must have been quite a popular game back in the day. At least for the people that were unfortunately struck down by that cruellest of conditions, ice rink allergy. Spare a thought for them.

RETRO TAT

Mario Mouse: surf the Nintendo way.

Each month we wait patiently for another odd bit of retro kit to be announced, and we're never disappointed. These USB mice from relentless bandwagon-jumpers Banpresto are not only the least inventive retro items we've ever seen, but their harsh plastic right angles look like they're designed to give you that special 'Ow! That really hurts' sensation. Even if you like the thought of Mario's massive conk giving you RSI, you'll have to wait until November for these to roll out of the factory.

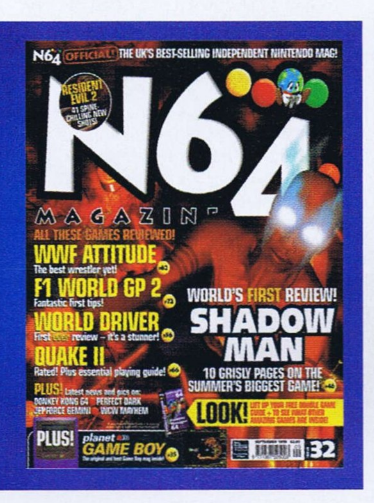


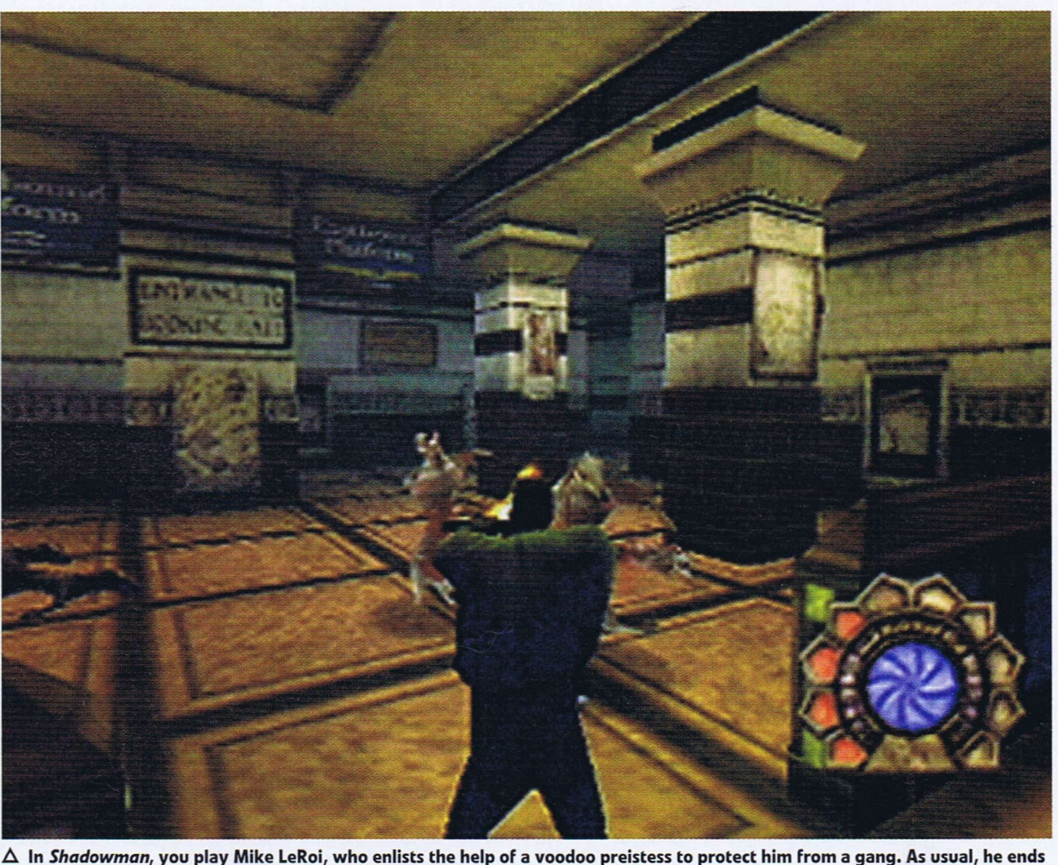
WRITE IN!

Have you seen a Japanese toy manufacturer brutally cashing in on nostalgia for old pixels? Tell us and we'll name and shame them in these very pages. Email ngc@futurenet.co.uk.

THIS MONTH IN NINTENDO

The world according to us in **September 1999 (N64 Magazine, Issue 32).**





△ In *Shadowman*, you play Mike LeRoi, who enlists the help of a voodoo preistess to protect him from a gang. As usual, he ends up being stuck between the worlds of the living and the dead. Honestly, voodoo preistesses – who'd have 'em.



△ *Shadowman* was Zelda-like in its sheer scope and vision.



△ Your task as Shadowman was to save the world from the coming apocalypse.



GAME OF THE MONTH
SHADOWMAN
NINTENDO 64



Acclaim's dark, murderous story of a cabbie who just wants a decent life (or death).

WHAT'S THIS? Looking for some soul – dark souls, that is, and 100 of them – with a hero able to hop about between the world of the living and the dead. Based on one of Acclaim's very own comic books.

THE BIG DEAL: Easily the darkest and most grown-up game in the N64 canon, *Shadowman* was a sprawling 3D adventure in hell – the first game brave enough to follow in *Zelda*'s revered footsteps.

WHAT WE THOUGHT: Exhausted but happy at the end of a life-sapping ten-page review, Jes Bickham described *Shadowman* as "a dark and glittering jewel in the N64's gaudy crown." He awarded the game 93%, which was one of the highest scores N64 Mag ever dished out.

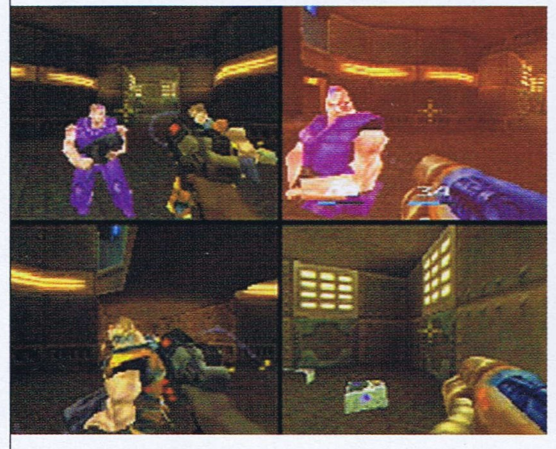
THE ACCLAIM LINE: "It's soul destroying." And a picture of a bloke with a pool ball for an eye. Why not?

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? We don't remember *Shadowman* tearing the charts apart, but its lead designers went onto much bigger things – Guy Miller and Simon Phipps both helped code up *Harry Potter* games for Battleship EA.

AND: Jaunty – a snake with a top hat and an appalling Irish accent – was really a bit rubbish.

EVERYONE WAS PLAYING...

QUAKE II
NINTENDO 64





The PC's gore extravaganza made its long-awaited debut on the Nintendo 64. And it didn't suck.

This swallowed up more than a few N64 Magazine lunchtimes. A Nintendo conversion of the blaster that made PC owners wet their beds in excitement, *Quake II* stubbornly ignored the march towards 'real life' shooters led by *GoldenEye* and its allies, and delivered instead an obscenely bloody marathon of all-out gun-pumping and squelching corpse chunks. The game was so fast it was actually possible to complete the first level in around 11 seconds.

Quake II sparkled with ingenious level designs and crunchy sound effects (shotgun: BOOM-clunk-click!). The single-player we liked, but the deathmatch we loved. 'Probably even more enjoyable than *GoldenEye*', we said. Really?



OTHER REVIEWS THIS MONTH

World Driver Championship
Unexpectedly brilliant *Gran Turismo* wannabe for N64.
91%

WWF Attitude
Comprehensive wrasslin' with hilarious create-a-fighter nonsense.
88%

R-Type DX
Legendary shoot-'em-up and its sequel, Game Boyed for the masses.
★★★★★

WORST GAME...

F1 WORLD GRAND PRIX
NINTENDO 64





F1 racing games regularly won the battle of the sales in the '90s, and the original *F1 World Grand Prix* deserved its chart crown – gibberingly realistic, so accurate it actually hurt, and the only decent proper racing game on the N64. This sequel, though, incurred our wrath. It was essentially *the same game*, except for updated team rosters and an odd 'Broadcast mode' that purported to replay real-life F1 races, but really just made the finishing order correct without getting the actual race right. Rev-olting.

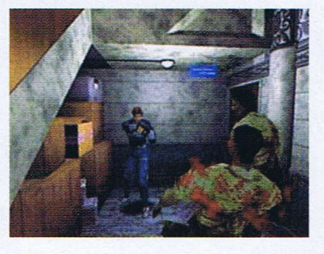
OTHER NEWS

Old news, tastefully repackaged



MAKING A SPLASH

Gamecube was still the mysterious Project Dolphin back then, and we hedged our bets with the 'Dead Certs' that would be available on the machine. Like, er, Killer Instinct 3, Street Fighter 3 and Shadowman 2. Although we got full marks for Super Mario and Metroid, mind.



SHOCK HORROR

Capcom surprised everyone by bringing the two-disc Playstation million-seller *Resident Evil 2* to the N64, and we 'flew all the way to Japan' to deliver a hefty investigation of the first half hour – expressing mild surprise that Capcom had left the door animations in. We'd get used to it.



LETTERS IT BE

Mailbox included a man who'd found a sachet of sugar named after a *Star Fox* villain, someone who wanted Nintendo and Microsoft to team up to make a version of Windows for Nintendo 64, and 'I don't think many people pop down to B&Q for a rocket launcher.'



Bring back the memories – or fill in the brainholes with new ones

CLASSIC BOXART

STARWING, SNES (1995)

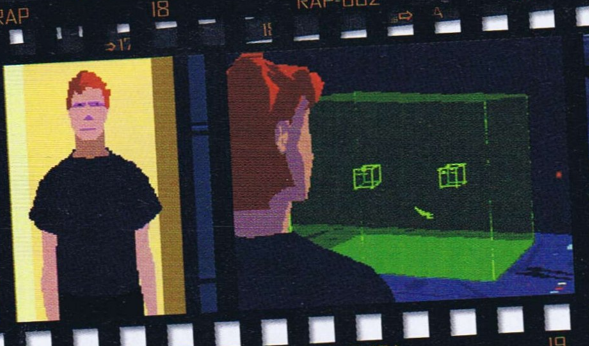


This cover saw the first appearance of the sleek Arwings. Great. It also saw the first (and last) appearance of the sinister animal mannequins created specially by Nintendo's little-used taxidermy division. We're sure the idea was to avoid making Star Fox and the team look too cutesy, but giving them the look of recently killed and stuffed animals is clearly much, much worse. It's actually their eyes that really give us the skin-shudders, though. Imagine them moving! Don't, actually.

CLASSIC CUTSCENE

ANOTHER WORLD, SNES (1993)

Delphine's groundbreaking textless adventure practically invented the cutscene, and used real 3D – a stunner for the time – to create a grippingly cinematic intro which showed scientist hero Lester getting zapped into another dimension after an accident with a particle accelerator. A moody shot near the end was little but dark skies and the patter of rain. Dynamite.





CLASSIC COCK-UP

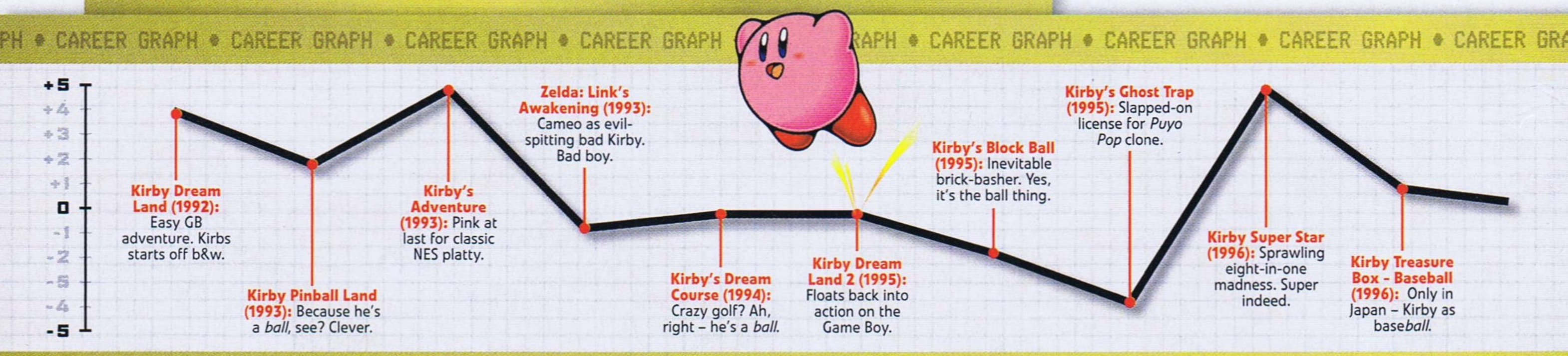
MANIAC MANSION : NES (1990)

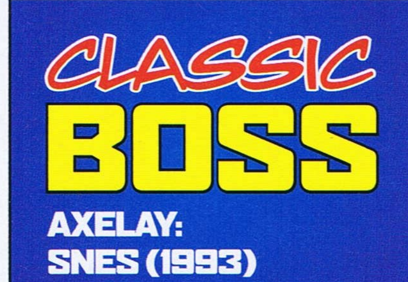
Former Lucasfilm bloke Douglas Crockford wrote a superb article detailing the bizarre cuts the controversy-averse Nintendo demanded from the NES version of popular PC horror mystery *Maniac Mansion*. "Getting your brains sucked out," dead bodies, suggestive portraits – all cut out. But what did they leave in? A small furry animal meeting an unpleasantly bloody death inside a household appliance. Makes sense.



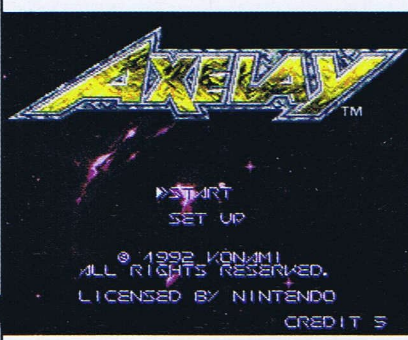
CAREER GRAPH: KIRBY

How a featureless pink splotch went from zero to hero.



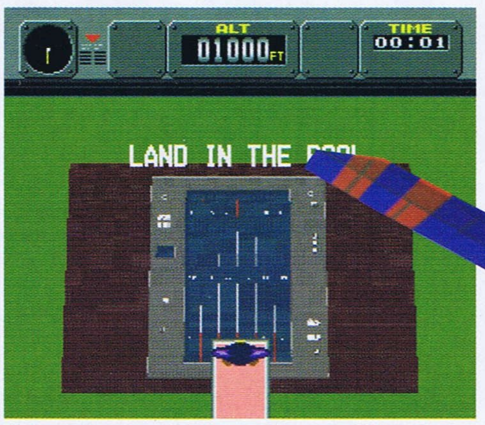


CLASSIC BOSS
AXELAY: SNES (1993)



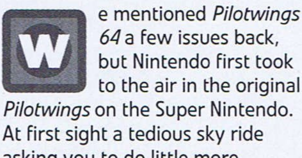


Konami's *Axelay* was the prettiest little shooter in town back in its day – now, its fudged pseudo-3D, with the planet surface rolling toward you like a slick of spilled syrup has dated somewhat poorly. Even so, Wayler here ("a ruthless freak of nature composed of lava and metal," explains the game's manual), has actually held up pretty well against the ravages of time. All big fists and angry mouth, he represented the absolute peak of boss art when he emerged from the red-hot, molten waves – and no doubt influenced Nintendo themselves when it came to creating the lava monsters for the Star Fox series.





△ Penguins – arguably the world's most efficient divers.

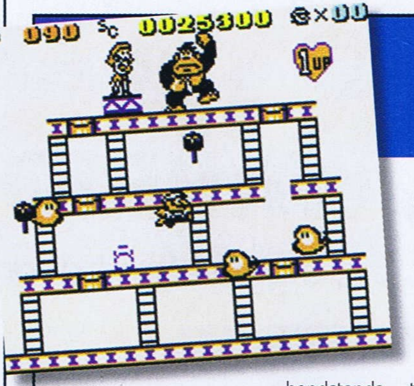


CLASSIC LEVEL
PILOTWINGS 64 BONUS STAGE 1

We mentioned *Pilotwings 64* a few issues back, but Nintendo first took to the air in the original *Pilotwings* on the Super Nintendo. At first sight a tedious sky ride asking you to do little more complicated than parachute onto a big bullseye, it was actually a tortuous regime of flying lessons so difficult you'd end up grinding your teeth down to stubs.

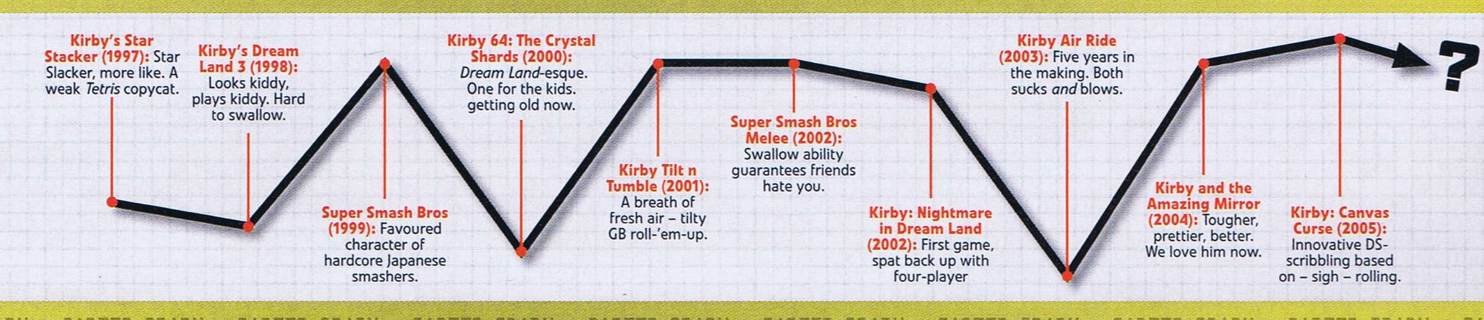
The best level, though, was Bonus Stage 1. Somehow manage to sky-dive onto a cruelly moving platform in any of the levels proper, and the serious-minded *Pilotwings* coders suddenly lost it, inviting you to guide a penguin off a high-diving board (*1000 feet* high, to be exact) and into a swimming pool. Dead funny, and, after literally getting your nose bent out of shape by repeated crash landings in the main missions, gratifyingly easy.

Still, in typical Pilotwings style, it wasn't all fun and games. What happened if you got your fingers in a twist and sent the poor bird tumbling tail-over-beak towards an eye-wincing concrete landing? Your on-screen instructor congratulating you with "What a waste of a bonus stage!" Yeah, cheers for that.



LOST CLASSIC
DONKEY KONG : GAME BOY (1994)

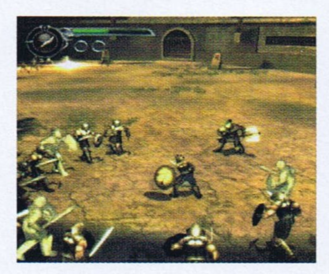
Donkey Kong's first four levels were a living tribute to the 1980 arcade original (complete with the fabled Cement Factory level, which is oddly missing from every version before or since). But from level five it became a neat little puzzle game, with Mario bunging a key around a level in order to unlock a fastened door. Does that sound somewhat familiar? Last year, Nintendo reached into *Donkey Kong*'s corpse and pulled out its heart for use in *Mario Vs Donkey Kong* on the Game Boy Advance. Keys, dustbins, handstands… they were all pilfered from this Game Boy lovely. Even the somersaulting on wires – which we bet you thought was nicked from *Super Mario Sunshine* – was nicked.

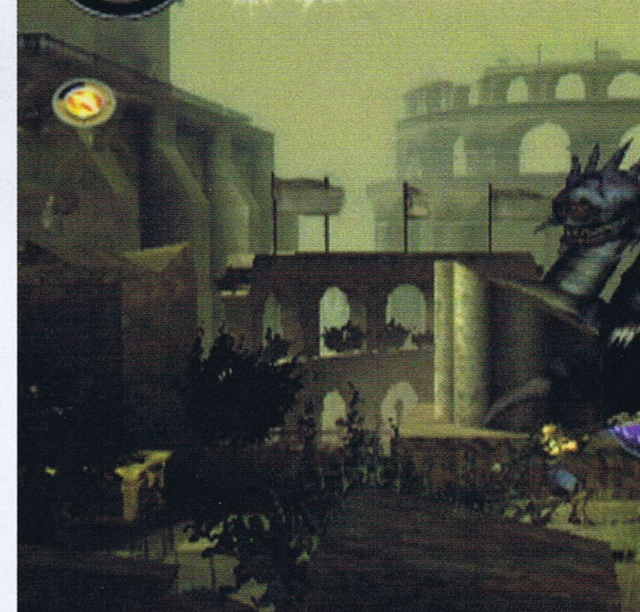


BORN TO KILL
Sparta was a military state where weak-looking babies were dropped off a cliff called the Place Of Rejection. They'd be taught fighting from the age of seven and engaged in contests to see who could take the hardest floggings. At 13 they'd be left to fend for themselves in the wilderness. Nutters!

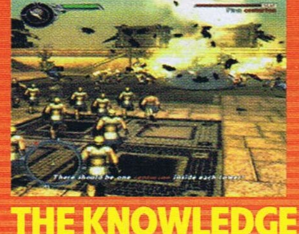




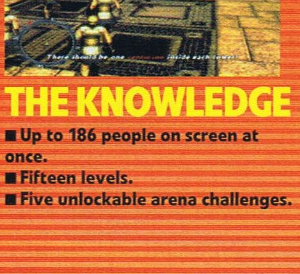




△ Spartan isn't afraid to mix it up with things 600 times his size.



THE KNOWLEDGE
- Up to 186 people on screen at once.
- Fifteen levels.
- Five unlockable arena challenges.



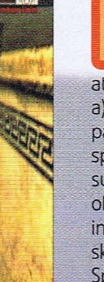
FACTFILE
- **Who's making it?**
Creative Assembly
- **What have they done before?**
Rome: Total War (PC)
A more tactical precursor to this game, with a factual bent. Nice animations of horses, too.

SPARTAN
TOTAL WARRIOR

All pile on! It's the biggest fight ever!



△ See the bloke with the crew cut there? He's Castor – an oily sort of fella.



Quick history quiz: what was the decisive factor in King Leonidas's defeat of the Persians at Thermopylae in 480 BC? Was it: a) his decision to fight in a narrow pass, funnelling the Persians into a space where they couldn't use their superior numbers, b) the invention of the flame-thrower c) the ineffectiveness of the Persians' skeleton pterodactyls, or d) the Spartans' giant robot?

If you answered a), congratulations, brainiac. You'll probably want to leave *Total Warrior* alone while you go and read some more books. If you answered b), c) or d), well, you're an idiot, but at least you're going to enjoy *Total Warrior*.

Luckily, a flippant attitude to history isn't *Spartan*'s main selling point. That's the battles – huge, city-wide affairs with up to 200 people scampering about at once.

Spartan is being made by the people behind the Total War series, which means beautiful detail and frantic scraps. There's little in the way of stealth here – even missions where you're told to keep things quiet invariably end with Roman heads littering the sand. It's the same combat you might have seen on the BBC's Time Commanders.

You're actually in charge of the baddest ass in the entire Spartan army. Known only as the Spartan – which must get confusing – he starts with only a sword and shield, but quickly upgrades his kit thanks to the favour of the gods.

The combat's simple to grasp but tricky to master. The Spartan has a couple of



History with a pinch of salt. And blood.

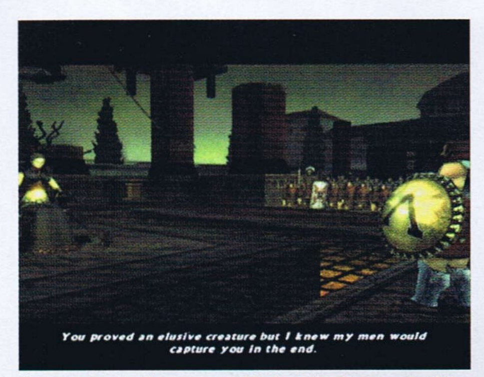


△ These guys are absolute swines – they've got a much better sword-reach than you, and they block *all the time.*

△ This is Elektra – no she's not as pretty as Jennifer Garner, is she?

△ A glowing sword means that the range attack is ready to use.

△ Skeletons are a nightmare – they're not as spindly as they look, and flaming arrows aren't terribly effective on brittle bones.



△ Later on, the Romans use Medusa the Gorgon. Luckily, the Geneva convention wasn't invented back then.



△ Handily, knocking most people into fires kills them outright.






△ We're very fond of the arm-flapping animation that everyone – even the hardened combat vets – goes into.


△ It's all gone a bit Jason and the Argonauts here. Get up the stairs!


△ You can use your evasive roll to put out flames. If you're quick.


△ Skeletons with bows and arrows, eh? That's just cheating.

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

The secret to combat in *Spartan: Total Warrior* is the range modifier – or, for laymen, 'Holding Down L.'


■ Tapping L and A together with perfect timing will execute a basic fatality move. Which is nice…


■ … but L and B can clear out half a dozen enemies at once with a charging decapitation move.


■ Holding L while you fire arrows unleashes a volley, which can take down three or four charging adversaries at once.


■ And then there's the ultimate turn-'em-to-stone magic attack. They will come back to life unless smashed to bits, though.



△ A biscuit? Ah, why not? I'm not MADE OF STONE. Ah-hahaha!

slash combos, an evasive roll and a guard-breaking shield-slam, but you can range modify any of these by holding L. It's also fearsomely hard.

But these bad guys aren't your typical kung fu cannon fodder. Try to aimlessly slash through a bunch of Romans and you'll be hacked up like a gerbil in a lawnmower. Tactical play is the key – like drawing superior numbers into a narrow pass (see?) and taking heads with a well-timed slash. As the game progresses, the Spartan learns new skills and gets new weapons – including the double-edged Blades Of Artemis and our favourite, codenamed the Massive Hammer. He can also use limited magic, mostly of the turning-things-to-stone variety, although that takes a fair amount of skewered enemies to build up.

> "TACTICAL PLAY IS THE KEY – LIKE DRAWING SUPERIOR NUMBERS INTO A NARROW PASS"

As *Spartan* gets more liberal with the historical accuracy, things get tougher, thanks to the variety of enemies. Skeletons, as anyone who's seen Jason and the Argonauts knows, can't be harmed



△ This is the Spear of Achilles, which is pretty good but still not as good as an enormous great hammer.







△ Bombs the size of a spacehopper – still in development in the fifth century BC.

by arrows – they have to be hacked up or smashed to bits. Undead troops can come back from virtually anything, and need to be totally dismembered or set on fire to be finished off for good, and Giants have to be peppered with arrows.

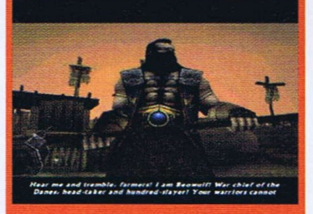
If you've seen the likes of *Dynasty Warriors* this may all sound familiar, but there are two crucial differences: tactics and brutality. For a start, the bodies don't disappear. After a battle, the ground is littered with corpses.

There's also some extra killing kit to discover, but this is where disappointment sets in. Catapults, ballistas and cauldrons of boiling oil can all be triggered, but only as a part of preset events. There's also no way to command your troops – they'll simply dash to key points in the battle, and it's up to you who to follow and support. It's a stripped-down system compared to *Total War*, presumably designed not to tax our fragile, console-owning minds, but it can be frustrating.

Still, that's a small price to pay for some of the most epic battles since Braveheart. The key tactics here are opening doors to let your allies in and sticking close to significant figures – like Spartan king Leonidas or legendary argonauts Castor and Pollux. Even Elektra makes an appearance, though it's the tragic Greek siren rather than Jennifer Garner.

Supremely hard and very rewarding, *Spartan*'s looking excellent with just a couple of months' development to go. Just don't expect it to help with your history tests. Ⓝ

HIT AND MYTH



Educational gaming? Forget it. Creative have plundered pretty much all of ancient history to complete their character line-up. Apart from the Spartans existing at the height of the Roman Empire – which didn't happen – you'll also see this guest appearance from Beowulf, an entirely different legend with no place in Rome. Still, nice beard.



ENTER THE ARENA

Not enough killing in the main game? Head for the colosseum, where there's an unlimited supply of bodies in Arena mode.



■ **Things kick off with a pile of barbarians. Fortunately, nobody's thought to inform them of our superior weapon technology, so it's flaming arrows in the guts all round and an easy bye to the semi-finals.**



■ **Then things start to get tougher with giants, centurions and harder enemies. Eventually, they'll start dishing out magic and projectiles of their own, at which point rolling around like Samus Aran becomes a valid tactical decision.**

NGC VERDICT

UK	US	JAPAN
SEPT	SEPT	TBA



Not as tactical as you might think – most of the strategic decision making's simply working out when you've killed enough people – but with combat this brutal, who cares? It's an unrelenting murder-'em-up with enough variety to keep even the easily-bored entertained. This could be the modern successor to classic side-scrolling beat-em-ups like *Final Fight* or *Streets Of Rage*.

ANTICIPATION RATING





SSX ON TOUR

You'll be coming down the mountain at six hundred miles an hour…

Off the top of our heads, we can think of several reasons why snowboarding's better than skiing – it's cooler, it's easier, and most importantly, when you've got both boots strapped to the same board, there's literally *no chance* that your feet can go either side of a tree so that you smash your unmentionables into the trunk at 40 miles an hour.

It was a bit of a surprise, then, when we discovered that the all-new twin-tip action in *SSX On Tour* actually works really well. It's got the same manic, downhill feel as the boarding, except for some subtle differences – for instance, while tweaking the control stick normally pulls a board-nose, on skis it's used to right yourself if you end up going backwards. Alternatively, you can just keep going the wrong way, with your skier glancing back

SLOPE FM

One aspect of SSX that's always a treat is the piste playlist. This year's a departure from the traditional club tunes to emphasise so-hip-you've-never-heard-of-them guitar bands and tooth-grinding frat-rock, with a bit of hip-hop chucked in.

△ There's much less action on the HUD, with just the boost bar across the bottom.

THE KNOWLEDGE

- 12 new tracks set across four sections of one big mountain.
- All-new Monster tricks.
- All the boarders from the previous games, plus eight customisable newbies.
- Licensed boots, bindings and haircuts. Actually, we don't think the haircuts are licensed.

FACTFILE

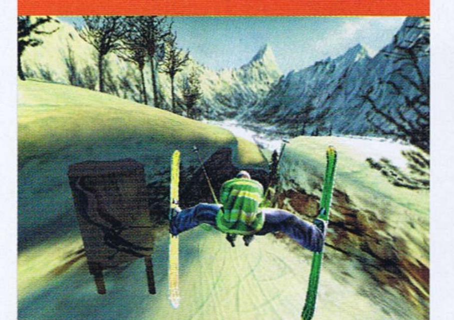
Who's making it?
EA Big

What have they done before?
FIFA Street (NGC/105 71%)
Another 'radical' reworking of a traditional sport.

△ That little skull represents your stability – get clattered, and you'll need to tap buttons to right yourself.

BIG AIR

As ever, tricks are crucial – they build up boost in the race events, and impress other people in the Shred challenges.



With a bit of planning, it's actually possible to pull off two or three of the game's Monster tricks in one leap.



Boards and skis, as you'd expect, can pull off different tricks – skiers traditionally get the more eye-watering ones.



It's possible to do hand-plants on certain bits of scenery for hidden bonuses.



As ever, going off-piste is the best way to find bonuses.

Preloading tricks is crucial, or you'll just scuff it on take-off.

over their shoulder to make sure they don't clatter into a cable car support. Nobody wants to look stupid, after all.

This season, *SSX* is all about rep, as you play as a mountain novice hoping to make the leap to full-fledged Mountain Rockstar – the ultimate slope-based accolade.

The racing's the same as ever, but the big events are Shred challenges – late night, non-sanctioned runs where the object is to get as much respect as possible by pulling off massive tricks. These have changed slightly from *SSX 3*'s, too – the 'Uber' trick tag's been ditched entirely, and the board-twirling Monster tricks are now accessed by waggling the C-stick in Street Fighter-style quarter-circles.

Another, slightly less savoury way to build your rep is simply slapping everyone in sight on the way down the mountain; in contrast to last year's deserted terrain, the nursery slopes are heaving with novices. They'll be banned from the slopes during races, but in the Shred challenges, they're fair game – serves them right for getting in your way.

Once again, the whole event takes place across a single mountain, but this time the courses are more closely linked – on the now-traditional thirty-minute descent, it's now possible to choose your route at several key stages.

As in last season, getting too happy-slappy with your board gloves results in other boarders getting a little upset and hunting you down – even at the expense of losing a race – and you'll inevitably end up in a downhill showdown or two trading flips and punches.

Each venue en route offers different things to collect and other, optional challenges like Style Blaster (exactly like it sounds) and Monsters Of Metal (your guess is as good as ours). Ready to get crazy?

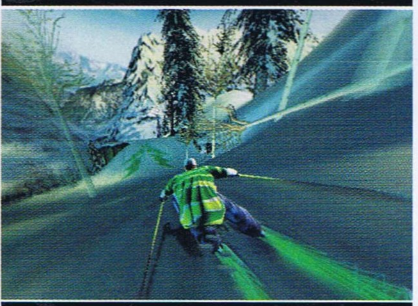
GETTING SKETCHY



The most immediately noticeable change to the look of *SSX* comes on the menu screen. No more clean lines and crispy buttons – now it's all sketchy-style visuals straight out of an underground boarding video. This is all part of the 'plot' – the idea being that you're a novice boarder who scribbles new board designs in your note pad as you go. Note the skull on the bottom-left of these screens – that's just one of the designs you can pick to represent your boarder's stability.

NGC VERDICT





Despite the addition of skiing, *SSX* still doesn't feel hugely different to its predecessors, although it's definitely a lot more polished. Our one reservation is the new customisable player options – we loved the old boarders with their stupid catchphrases, and we're not sure if slapping a pompadour 'fro on a generic boarder will be quite the same.

ANTICIPATION RATING



NO SURVIVORS

Day of Reckoning 2 is rammed to bursting with different match modes, but what happened to the Survivor Series? Although the Series arena is still available to wrestle in, you can't actually take part in any of its signature matches. Shame.



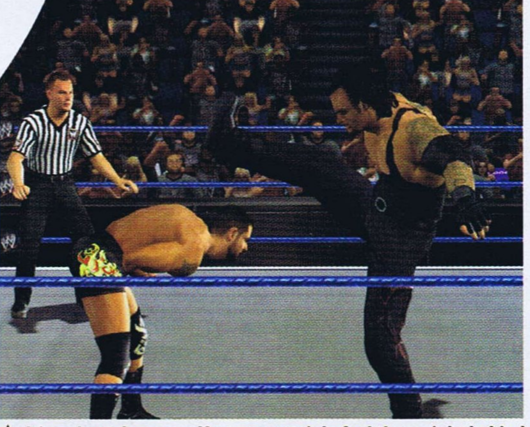
THE KNOWLEDGE

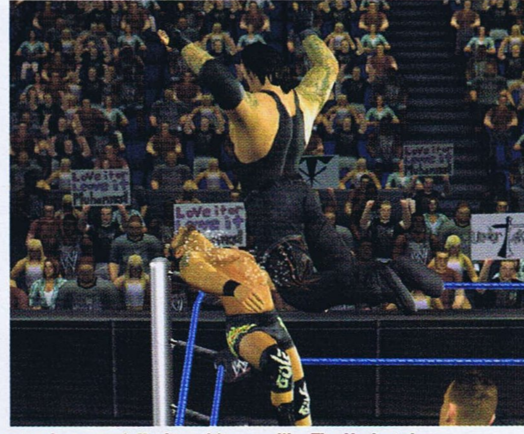
- 44 different wrestlers, with some WWE legends joining the new breed of grapplers.
- All the different arenas, from Raw and Smackdown, to Summerslam and The Great American Bash.
- Loads of different match types – Cage matches, Hell in a Cell, Table, Ladders and Chairs, and Bra and Panties.
- Brand new Story mode.
- Hugely in-depth create-a-wrestler mode.

FACTFILE

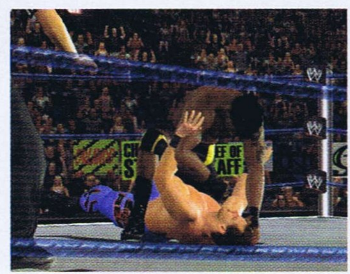
Who's making it?
THQ

What have they done before?
WWE Day of Reckoning (NGC/98 74%)
The best wrestling game on Gamecube, but some irritating flaws prevent it from being an essential purchase.



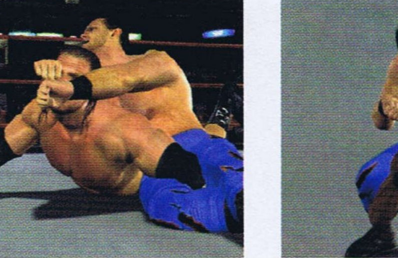


△ It's as brutal as ever. You can certainly feel the weight behind the attacks, especially from big men like The Undertaker.



△ Orlando Jordan's punches are lethal.





△ Submission moves are also a good way to give your grappler a bit of a rest.

WWE DAY OF RECKONING 2



△ Chris Benoit falls victim to Triple H.

Yet more rasslin' action, but can this go one better than its prequel? We reckon it just might…



Last year's *Day of Reckoning* was the best WWE game on a Nintendo console since *No Mercy* on the N64, and although it was a bit too button bashy for our liking it did apply new twists, such as momentum shifts and a weight-balancing system. Then there were excellent character models, and the best Story mode in any WWE game to date.

Despite this it wasn't quite the '*Smackdown* for Gamecube' that we were hoping for. But the good news is that THQ weren't happy with simply making the best wrestler on the system and have made some improvements. The first thing you'll notice is the graphics – the wrestlers aren't the least bit angular and look the spitting image of their human equivalent, from Triple H's big nose to Trish Stratus's big, er… anyway, visually, it's brilliant.

The action remains largely unchanged from the last outing. It's simple, intuitive and reliant on knowing the moves, but crucially, thanks to the new stamina system, you now have to plan your moves ahead rather than button-bash at random. See, if you just mash away, your wrestler will get tired and you'll no longer be able to pull off powerful moves.

There's also a new hold system; if you're put into a hold, an icon pops up enabling the player to guess which type of move the opponent is going for – a rest move, a submission move, a taunt or a drain move – and if you guess right, you break free. This also has a direct effect on the player's stamina levels – guess correctly, and you'll gain vital energy.

The final change sees the powering-up of finishing moves – the more you batter an opponent, the more your finisher will be charged. If your finishing meter is on the maximum three bars it'll have a lot more impact than if it's grounded on one. It does take longer to fill to the top, however.

One thing, though: after taking a fair bit of punishment, the wrestlers spend a ridiculous amount of time staggering around stunned and wide open to attack. Still, it's all very fast, slick, pacey and powerful.

The best bit about the last game, the Story mode, is back once again.

> "DAY OF RECKONING IS SET TO RETAIN IT'S TITLE AS THE BEST WRESTLER ON GAMECUBE"

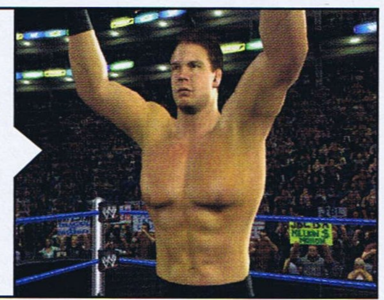
In the original *DOR*, it was your job to take a rookie wrestler from the basement-ranks of the WWE all the way to the glorious, dizzy heights of WWE Champion. *Day Of Reckoning 2* picks up where that game left off, but this time you've lost your title and you've got to get it back.

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

Four of the biggest new names in Day Of Reckoning 2.

JOHN BRADSHAW LAYFIELD

Driven to the ringside in a limousine, and sporting a ten-gallon hat, JBL is the JR Ewing of WWE. Elevated from mediocrity, he's now one of the main players on WWE Smackdown, and ruled as champion for months before his reign was ended by wrestling's equivalent of Eminem, John Cena.





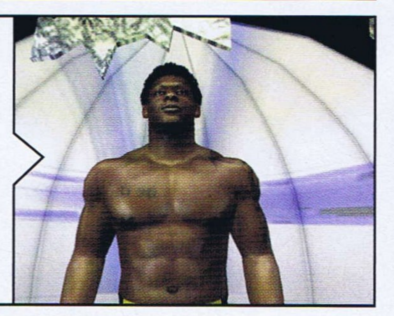


MUHAMMAD HASSAN

Hassan has succeeded where most of the WWE's anti-American characters have failed by actually winning matches. He was demolished by Hulk Hogan at Wrestlemania this year, but you can't have everything. Still, he's pretty damn hard and is a useful character to choose in DOR2.

ORLANDO JORDAN

Currently the WWE US Champion, Orlando is a member of JBL's cabinet over on Smackdown. Generally, this means he gets to do all JBL's dirty work and tends to find himself on the wrong end of attacks by the big guys while Bradshaw legs it. Still, he defeated new WWE champ John Cena, so he can't be too shabby.



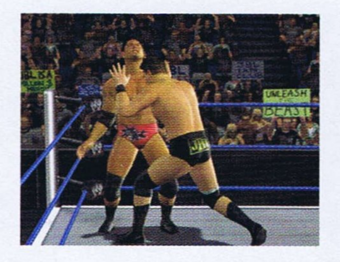


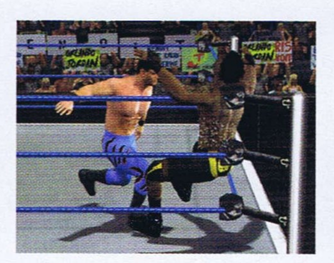
CARLITO CARIBBEAN COOL

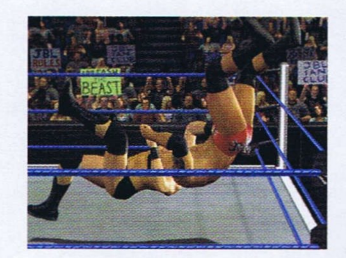
More than simply a particularly stupid haircut. Having won the US Championship and taken the Intercontinental title from Shelton Benjamin, he's marked for great things. He once fed The Big Show a poisoned apple in what seemed like a particularly disturbing version of the tale of Snow White.

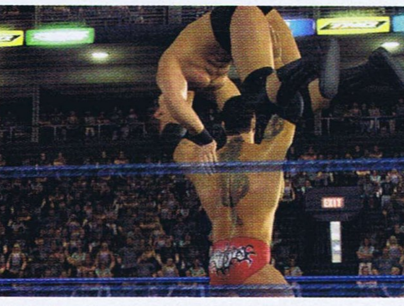


△ **Suplexes are good high-impact moves. Often devastating.**

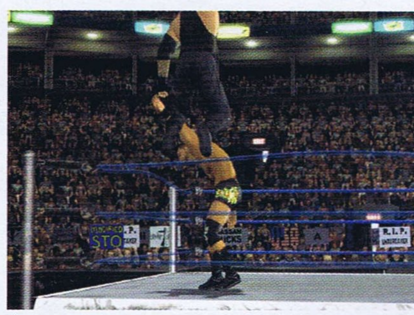








△ **Batista demonstrates his awesome power.**



△ **Undertaker's top-rope walk is in here, too.**

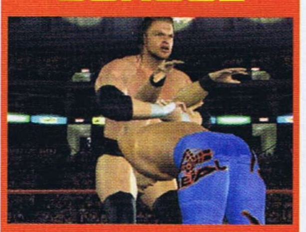
It's irksome, however, that you still have to play through Story mode with one of your own creations instead of an established superstar. THQ's original justification for this was that you could hardly have, say, The Rock starting out at the bottom, and we accepted this. But now? Losing the title at Wrestlemania is the ideal starting point for any wrestler on the roster, especially the likes of Austin or Triple H. It just doesn't make any sense to us. It's also slightly aggravating that you can't import your own creations from the first game.

Another peculiar thing is just how polite some of your opponents in Story mode are, especially at the beginning. "You defeated the great Y2J!" bellows Chris Jericho at one point. "But you did it 1-2-3 in the squared circle and I respect that!" Sorry? That'll be the ultra-arrogant, really bad loser, Chris Jericho, suddenly transformed into Mr Respectful, when what he would have done in real – or fake, depending on your viewpoint – life would've been to demand a rematch and then smack you over the head with a steel chair.

As for the roster, it has been updated to reflect the 2005 squad, although there are some odd omissions. What happened to Rosey? He's one of the current tag champions, remember? What about the Bashams? And where's Lita, who, as this is written, is right at the centre of a slightly icky love triangle with Edge and giant, bald psychopath Kane, in one of the WWE's biggest storylines of the summer. Still, we're looking forward to playing as some WWE legends, even though THQ haven't confirmed who will be available.

But this is still looking like an improvement, and Day Of Reckoning is set to retain its title as the best wrestling series on Gamecube.

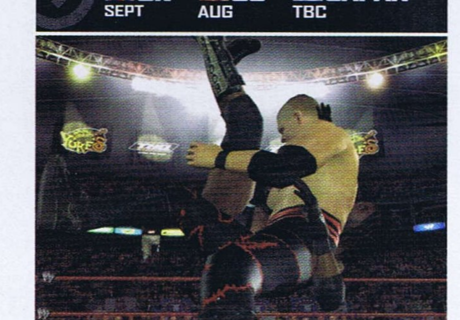
FINISHING SCHOOL



All the finishing moves are present and correct. Above, you can see Triple H launching his lethal Pedigree manoeuvre onto Chris Benoit. There are three 'levels' of finisher in *DOR2*, each more powerful than the last, which increase as you dish out more punishment. Do you go for your finisher straight away, but with less power and the chance it might not down your opponent? Or wait until your meter's full? Tactics are vitally important in *Reckoning 2*.

NGC VERDICT

UK SEPT | US AUG | JAPAN TBC



Unless something goes disastrously wrong, this will turn out better than *Day Of Reckoning*. There are some minor issues, but nothing to lose any sleep over. However, we're not sure if this is going to be different enough to warrant shelling out for if you've already got the first game. Whatever, WWE fans will lap this up like thirsty dogs.

ANTICIPATION RATING






KNEES UP

One thing that's been noticeably improved is the animation – new player skeletons make each golfer's swing visibly different. You can even make out Tiger's re-worked swing – he designed it to relieve pressure on his injured knee, and it's noticeably changed his game.



THE KNOWLEDGE

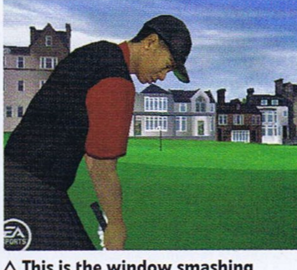
- Six licensed courses, including TPC at Sawgrass and the Pebble Beach Golf Links.
- There are nine PGA Tour players, including new faces Vijay Singh and Retief Goosen.
- Game Face technology allows you to shove your own features into the game.
- David Feherty and Gary McCord doing commentary and 'irreverent observations.'

FACTFILE

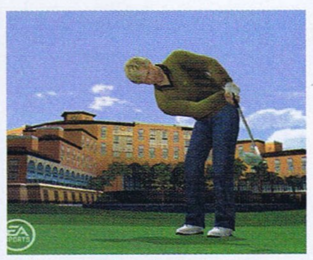
Who's making it?
EA

What have they done before?
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005
(NGC/98 88%)
EA aren't yet masters of football, but for golf, there's no one better.

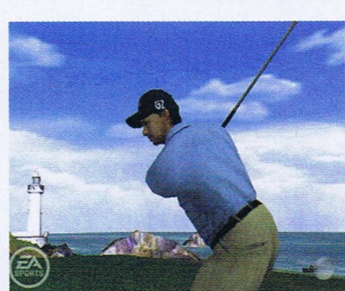
△ Tiger's got the usual array of 'strop' animations activated when he fluffs it.



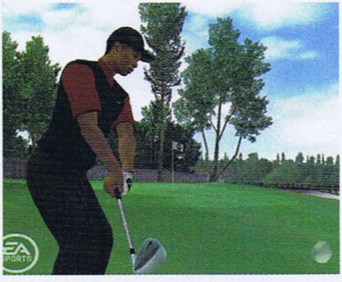
△ This is the window smashing bonus game. No, not really.



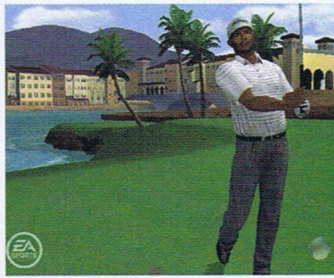
△ This isn't Tiger. It's Jack Nicklaus.



△ Pay attention to the wind…



△ … and watch out for odd slopes.



△ This is Vijay Singh. He's new.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006

Still not as scary as 'Shark Beach 2006'. Badum-tish!

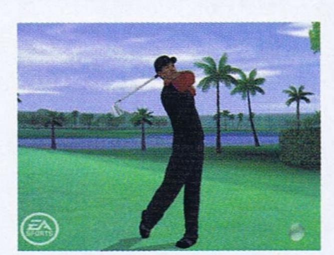


What else can you do? With Woods already dominating the realistic golf-sim world and a control system that's as near to the real thing as possible without actually smacking a ball-shaped peripheral with a stick, surely any more tinkering with the gameplay is just silly? Why not just stick in some extra courses and sell the game again, eh?

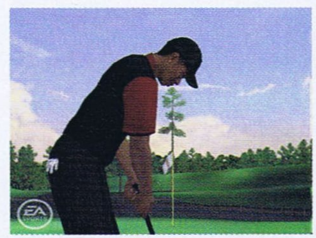
Well, according to EA, you've had it too easy recently. That's why they've tweaked the ball-spin system from the Jedi-style in-flight after-touch of *Woods 2005* to a new C-stick system. Effectively, you nudge the stick to alter your ball's spin – giving it a low, flat trajectory with backspin, say – except that you have to do it at the same time as you're taking your shot. At first it feels a bit like driving a car and making a sandwich at the same time, but with practice it becomes second nature.

> "ACCORDING TO EA, YOU'VE HAD IT TOO EASY RECENTLY"

Also ditched is the chatty caddy – with nobody murmuring 'left a bit' while you line up a putt, sinking a birdie is a slightly trickier prospect. Well, sort of – he's been replaced by a sort of worm's eye vwoooosh towards the hole that shows the perfect hit, so it still isn't too difficult. But isn't that what *Tiger Woods* is all about? Nobody likes a double bogey. Fore!



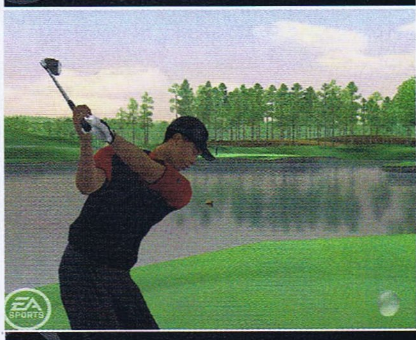
△ Whack! It's important not to jerk the stick. Like flying a plane, sort of.



△ Not pictured: the super-easy slow-mo perfect shot finder.

NGC VERDICT





In terms of changes to the gameplay mechanics, this really isn't a massive drive away from last year's Woods – but it's still the best 'proper' golf game around, and as the latest instalment it'll obviously be the most polished and up to date. Having won the British Open and the Masters, it's already been a good year for Tiger, and his new game looks like being yet another winner.

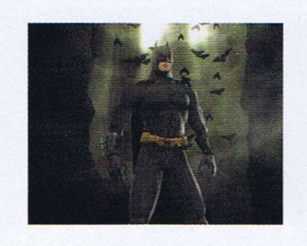
ANTICIPATION RATING





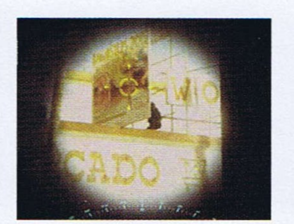






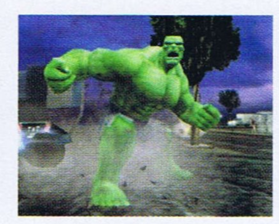


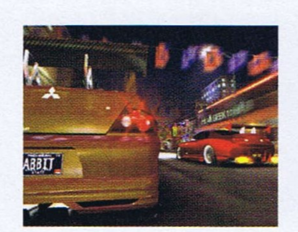


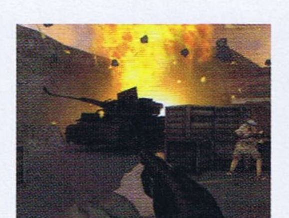



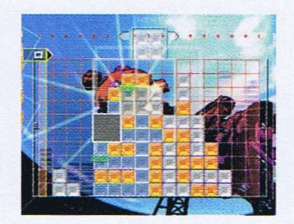


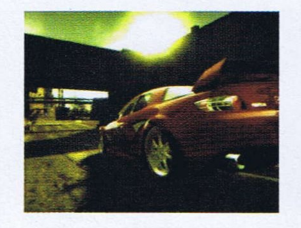


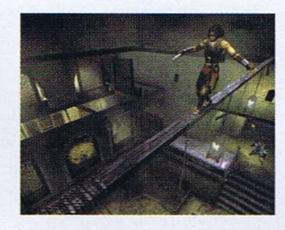


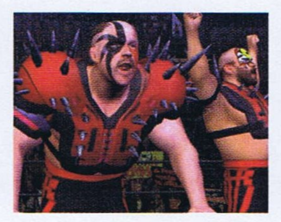




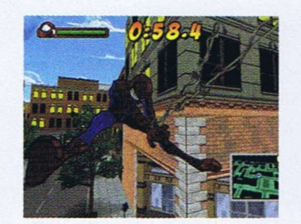


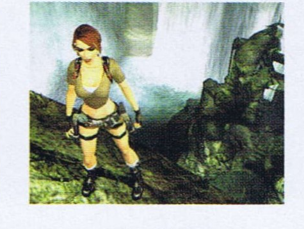


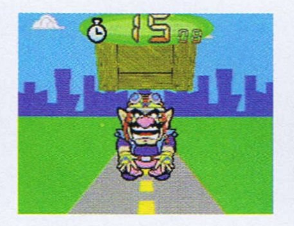






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THE MANY FACES OF MARIO

Easy, isn't it? Fake moustache, dopey hat – don't forget that big 'M' – and bright red dungarees.

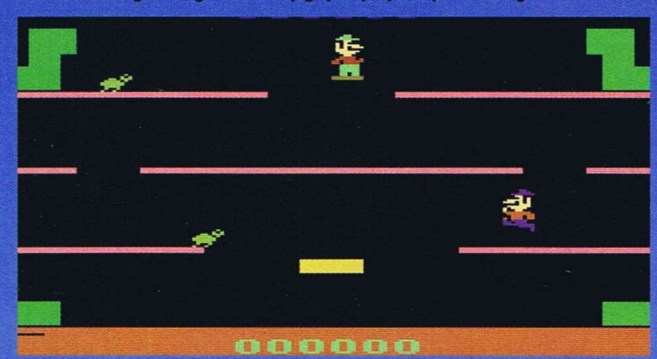
Get your best stereotypical Italian accent ready, deep breath, and… "Mama mia! It's-a me, a-Mario!" For added authenticity, mention spaghetti.

If only. A slew of actors have played Mario over the last quarter-century (with expensive make-up, full body suits, or just a fake plastic moustache that fell out of a Christmas cracker) and their diverse 'interpretations' of Nintendo's biggest brand show that turning a pile of pixels into a walking, talking mascot is a job even a talented actor like David Hasselhoff would struggle with. We continue our Mario season as we dip into 25 years of real-life Mario appearances, and interview the people who've Super Mario'd their way to stardom.






△ Great casting here, get a chubby guy to play the part of Luigi.



△ The original Mario Bros. Was it really worth crying about, Luigi?

THE PANICKING PLUMBER (1982)

WHAT'S GOING ON?
That's actually Luigi (see sequence of pics at the top) – before he hit the Atkins diet – over-acting his sideburns off for an old *Mario Bros.* ad. Terrified by the lifeless plastic props around him, he ends his performance almost weeping, "Mario, where are you?!" – just before a giant crab drags him off by his neck. Traumatising for kids, sure, but the Oscar for Buggiest Eyes was in the bag.

THE TALENT:
Unknown. Although we'd love to track this guy down and find out whether this advert was the pinnacle or the nadir of his acting career. Do you recognise this face? Is he your dad?

THE LYRICS (TO THE TUNE OF CAR 54, WHERE ARE YOU?)
Something's gumming up
the plumbing,
Poor Luigi's in a bind,
Giant turtles out to get him,
Creepy crabs are right behind,
Fighter flies, jeepers giants!
They're all coming out the pipes,
"Mario, where are you?!"

MARIO-O-METER:
The checkered shirt, the white baseball cap… that can't be the *real* Luigi.





THE GREATEST DANCER (1998)

WHAT'S GOING ON?
Mario move-bustin' terror, courtesy of the original Game Boy Camera software – obviously the nightmare of some Nintendo coder brought to terrifying life for all. Like your grandpa, Mario keeps his lower body completely out of the picture when he hits the dancefloor: it's left arm up, right arm up and, to finish, both arms up. Then simply repeat. *Forever.*

THE TALENT:
No idea, but the coders do thank Nirvana in the credits, so there's a possibility it's the reheated corpse of Kurt Cobain.

INCIDENTALLY:
Yes, the Ball minigame really *does* feature the disembodied head of Nintendo of Europe games chief Marko Hein.

MARIO-O-METER:
That's the top-of-the-range Mario suit right there, reserved for special occasions only. Like the haunting idiot-dance.



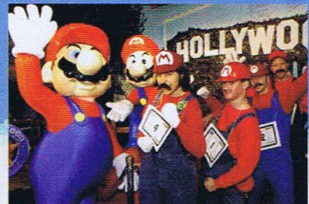
THE SO-CALLED LOOKALIKES (DEC 2003)

WHAT'S GOING ON?
Joining luminaries such as Lionel Richie, David Hasselhoff and Chuck Norris, Mario was immortalised in wax for California's Hollywood Wax Museum in 2003. As usual, Nintendo made a man bathe in his own sweat inside the Mario suit, but they also held a Mario lookalike contest. The four entrants visibly struggled to remember what it is Mario actually does with his hands.

THE TALENT:
All everyday Nintendo fans – except Patrick Clark (at the back of the picture below), who was there on behalf of US TV show G4. He came last. Joseph Rossi (left) won $500 and more, all thanks to a costume from "a performance I did in my high school acting class." Hopefully of Mario.

MARIO-O-METER:
"What's that you say? Mario wears *gloves*? Whatever – with this crude felt-tip moustache, the prize is good as mine."





△ Entrants for a lookalike contest.

THE MOVIE STAR (1993)

WHAT'S GOING ON? "Do you know what I like about mud? It's clean and it's dirty at the same time." Just one perplexing line from the film, which saw the Bros. transported to Dinohatten to foil a Bowser that was nothing like Bowser (largely on account of being Dennis Hopper) and rescue a princess who wasn't a princess. Yamauchi must have been spinning in his coffin-bed.

THE TALENT: British actor Bob Hoskins was an obvious pick for Mario, or at least the obvious pick after Danny DeVito, the first choice for the role. We wanted to interview Hoskins, but his agent told us "this is not something for Bob." as soon as we mentioned the word 'Mario'.

MARIO-O-METER: Luigi's forgotten his moustache and wears – please, no – *a backwards baseball cap.*





△ Mario Bros the movie: rubbish.

N·GC MARIO-O-METER

We've rated each performance for authenticity, using a moustache-based scale. Here's a brief explanation.

MARIO-O-METER – Wawawawawa
MARIO-O-METER – Mama mia.
MARIO-O-METER – Here-a we go!
MARIO-O-METER – Woo-hoooo!



It's a-me!



WE ♥ MARIO

"We've got nothing against a girl with a 'tache"





△ Poor Mario – reduced to bit parts in ice shows.

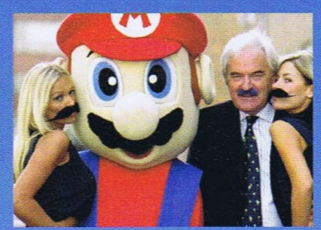
THE ICE MASTER (1989)

WHAT'S GOING ON?
This US ice show was buried safely in the TV archives until recently. Bowser lords it over everyone atop his very regal motorised wooden castle, before our twin heroes do him over. Good clean fun – except perhaps for the bit where Luigi uses some kind of gun to blow Goomba and Koopa Troopa to pieces.

THE TALENT:
Hard to tell, but we bet they're keeping this off their CV, seeing as they do only seven seconds of quality screen-time, most of it spent getting upstaged by a saucy Princess Toadstool and her 'jokes'. "The Koopa virus is on the loose – and you know how painful that can be!" Eh?

MARIO-O-METER:
It looks like someone's gone a bit overboard on the ear pills. And swallowed a plate.

MARIO-O-METER



△ Oh, the perks of being Mario...

DES AND THE GIRLS (2002)

WHAT'S GOING ON?
Super Mario Sunshine's launch saw two pretty girls half-dressed in – oops! – *red* dungarees, alongside Nintendo of Europe's own odd-looking Mario costume. Oh, and they painted Des Lynam's moustache purple. "The link may not be obvious between a moustachioed American plumber from Brooklyn and a legendary sports anchorman from London," admitted Nintendo.

THE TALENT:
Des we know. The girls and the guy in the sweat-suit are supplied by model agency Hel's Angels. Helen, the boss, told us, "Our actors are all incredibly loyal, because I pay them bloody well." She also sent a picture of another girl with a Mario lip-rug. Yum!

MARIO-O-METER:
We didn't know costumes could look ill until this photo, but we've got nothing against a girl with a 'tache. Just us?

MARIO-O-METER



△ The Super Mario Bros Super Show.

THE SUPER SHOWMAN (1989-91)

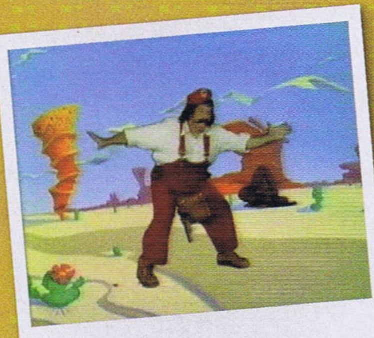
WHAT'S GOING ON?
"Hey, paisanos! It's the Super Mario Brothers Super Show!" If you were knee-high to a Goomba in the '80s, Mario actually came to life on school holiday mornings. Wedged between cartoons, the live-action comedy is best remembered for its star 'doing the Mario' – a breathlessly clumsy dance to the game music. We never found out what a paisano was. Shame.



LOU ALBANO SPEAKS!

We speak to the real Mario.

NGC: What was the work schedule like on the show?
LOU: I was Mario for five days a week, starting at seven or eight in the morning and running right through the day, for three or four months. It was all filmed at Sony Studios in California. I didn't know if we'd be successful... we were!



NGC: Do people still recognise you as Mario?
LOU: Oh, yeah – they come up to me in the street and say, "Hey! Lou! That show was great!" I just thank them for recognising me.

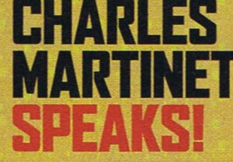
NGC: Do you still keep in touch with the cast?
LOU: I haven't seen Danny Wells [who played Luigi] in about a year, but when we get together we're always talking about the show. Like, when are they going to put the re-runs on again?

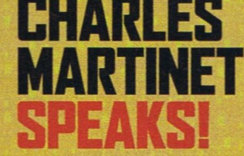
NGC: Sony is about to release the show on DVD...
LOU: Really? Great.

NGC: Do you think you'll see any of the cash from that?
LOU: Not sure, not sure. The money they paid me back then... I made a living out of it, let's say. I would have got a lot more today, though, that's for sure.

NGC: What are you up to now?
LOU: Personal appearances here and there, and I'm still doing movies – [rock 'n' roll flick] Complex World and [school comedy] 13th Grade. I just thank the Lord Jesus Christ for what I've been given.

NGC: Thanks Lou!
LOU: You're a gentleman.

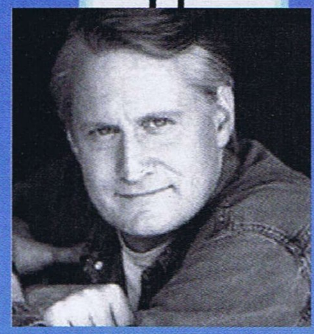




THE TALENT:
'Captain' Lou Albano was a wrestler par excellence (see the interview on the opposite page), until the powers that be heard his voice in a WWF cartoon and he was asked to read for our hero. One shave of the trademark beard later, and the rest is history.

MARIO-O-METER:
The hair looks like it's trying to forge its own career. But for '80s kids, this *is* Mario.





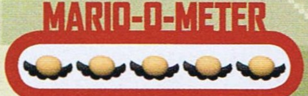
△ Charles Martinet – it's-a him.

THE VOICE (1990-PRESENT)

WHAT'S GOING ON?
Remember classics like "Thank-a you so much a-for to playing my game-a," "Bye bye!" and the unforgettable "Hup"? Lou Albano and old bug-eyes on previous pages might have twisted their throats into something resembling our hero, but there's only one true voice of Mario – filling ears with Mario squeakery in all the games and at official Nintendo events.

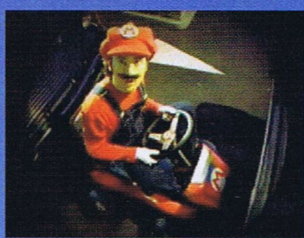
THE TALENT:
Charles Martinet crashed an audition in California in 1990 and has had Mario living inside his larynx ever since – along with Luigi, Wario, Waluigi, Wario, Baby Mario, even the baddies in *Super Mario Advance*. About the only Nintendo voice that isn't Martinet's is Shigsy's. We think…

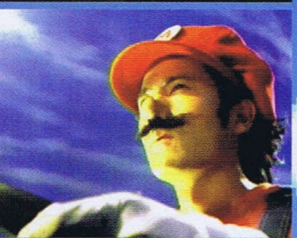
MARIO-O-METER:
You can't say "Mario" without the "It's-a me!".

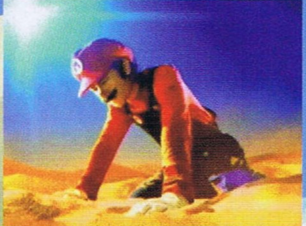


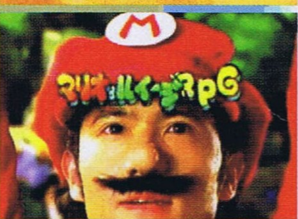
THE JAPANESE HOTTIE (2003)

WHAT'S GOING ON?
Nintendo had a line-up of big new Mario games ready in 2003 – *Double Dash*, *Mario & Luigi*… er, *Mario Party 5*. To get the Japanese salivating over them as they would over a fish meringue, a man was dressed as Mario and made to scream blue murder in a children's playground. And sit in a go-kart and yell "Mario Karto DOBORU DASH!". *Genuinely* scary.







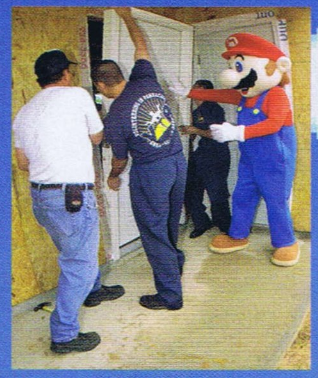


△ Please Goro, stop the screaming…

THE TALENT:
That will be Goro Inagaki, one fifth of long-running boy band SMAP ("Sports Music Assemble People") – a group so big that they even have their very own soft drink. It's slightly ironic, given the *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!* ad, that Imagaki hit the headlines in 2001 in dubious circumstances when he bumped a policewoman with his car.

MARIO-O-METER:
Great costume offset by a rubbish moustache, clearly made from an old man's wig.

MARIO-O-METER



△ Just one of the 1000 doors.

THE DOORMAN (2004)

WHAT'S GOING ON?:
Asked your marketing people to 'think outside the box', did you? Your reward: marketing *Paper Mario: The Thousand Year Door* by – here it comes – *buying 1000 doors*. House-building charity Habitat for Humanity was the recipient, and Mario turned up to boss the construction workers about. Two door puns in the press release – result!

THE TALENT:
A mystery. But look at the eyes, the posture – he's clearly getting ready to kick that guy's ass. Presumably Reggie Fils-Aime has to do *something* when not screaming at crowds from game expo podiums.

MARIO-O-METER:
Hard to fault, but there's a fat tummy missing. Must be hard work, holding up a door.

MARIO-O-METER

CHARLES MARTINET SPEAKS!

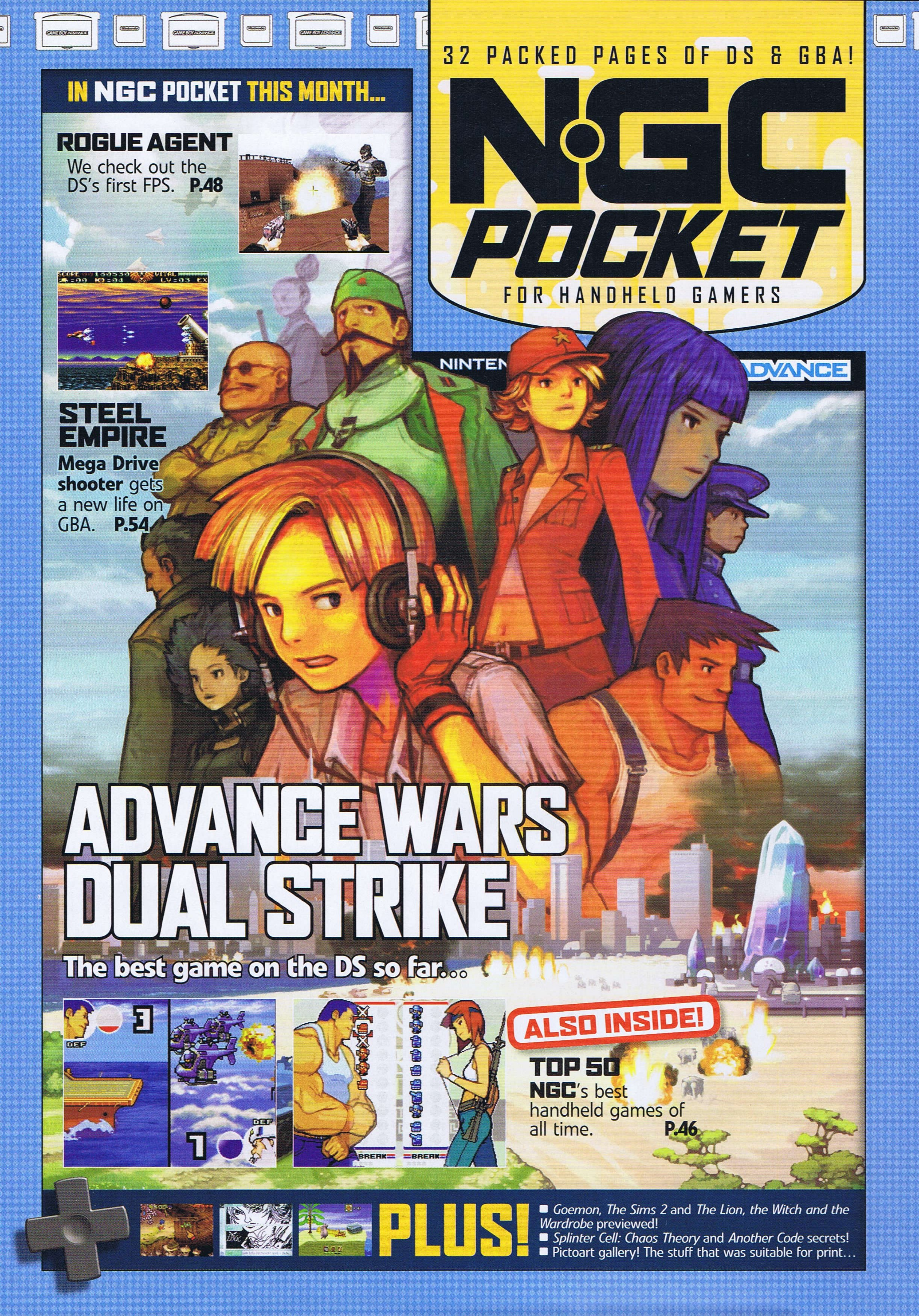
ARE YOU STILL ENJOYING DOING THE MARIO?
It's so totally fun. I got to talk to Miyamoto at this year's E3 and just express my gratitude for Mario and being given the opportunity to play him for so many years. I'm entering the 14th year of doing the voices now! Hopefully I'll keep going for many, many years.

WHAT'S THE REACTION LIKE TO AN ACTUAL TALKING MARIO AT SHOWS?
I tell ya, people who've never talked to Mario before – it's just so cute, they lap it up. There's something so universal about that character. Little babies start looking at him and pointing and laughing and giggling. So sweet.

WHO'S YOUR BIGGEST FAN?
We've made a couple of trips to Mexico – Mexican gamers are besides themselves with joy, really. One beautiful young Mexican woman came up to me two years ago and gave me a little Mario doll and said, "This was my first doll when I was a baby" – she wanted me to have it. I've still got it!

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE EVER HAD TO SIGN?
I've signed people's foreheads, their hands… people will lift up their trouser legs and I'll see Mario tattoos there. Holy tallulah! I've even seen my signature on eBay – that's hilariously funny.

WHAT'S COMING UP?
I have a set-up in my house now, so that I can transmit my voice via the internet anywhere in the world, live. So you can have Mario speaking to you in Harrod's in London, while I'm sitting at home in my bathrobe and slippers.


32 PACKED PAGES OF DS & GBA!
NGC POCKET
FOR HANDHELD GAMERS
IN NGC POCKET THIS MONTH...
ROGUE AGENT
We check out the DS's first FPS. P.48
STEEL EMPIRE
Mega Drive shooter gets a new life on GBA. P.54
ADVANCE WARS DUAL STRIKE
The best game on the DS so far...
ALSO INSIDE!
TOP 50
NGC's best handheld games of all time. P.46
PLUS!
Goemon, The Sims 2 and The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe previewed!
Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory and Another Code secrets!
Pictoart gallery! The stuff that was suitable for print...

NGC POCKET

NEWS ▪ NEWS ▪ NEWS ▪ NEWS

WELCOME TO NGC POCKET…

I honestly wish I could comment on *Advance Wars DS*, but I can't. Martin 'engineered' the flow of post through the office to ensure it remained 'safe' in his possession. I didn't argue. Because I've seen the claw hammer he keeps in his desk.

Which left me with *Rogue Agent* – the DS version of the title that had (deceased) N64 owners spinning in their grave. In fairness, it's pretty good – it's technically accomplished and isn't as bad as the GC version. It's the technical side of things that really interested me this month, though. It's nice and clear and silky smooth – a clear indication that the DS is more than capable of holding its own when it comes to the FPS.

Unfortunately, where EA messed up (other than the fact that enemies can take a shot to the face at point blank range) is the disappointing range of control options. I find using the stylus irritating – preferring the thumb shoe due to the fact that my right thumb is as long as a baby's arm – but others will have their own preferences – and there's the rub.

If a developer is trying to shoe-horn a game onto a system with a unique control scheme (I'm looking at you Rayman, Ridge Racer… even you Mario), it's imperative that as many permutations (suitable for the tiniest hands through to the largest) are accounted for through ample customisation options as possible. Otherwise, perfectly good games will end up just being, well, not so good.

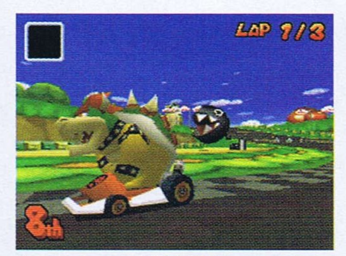
Geraint Rhys Evans, Handyman



NGC POCKET, NGC Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW
Issue 9, September 2005
Editor: The Welsh Wonder
Contributors: The Lazy Hippy, The Doctor, The Beast of the East.

NEW MARIO KART DETAILS!

The game your DS is waiting for…



△ Not too far off the GC version…

It's as perfect as you'd want – that's our initial impression after our (admittedly limited) hands-on. Gone are the comedy cars of *Double Dash*, and with them their co-pilots, leaving it just the way it should be – gimmick free Mario Karting, pitting Plumber against Princess, Mushroom against Monkey.

It gets better too – Nintendo have confirmed that the ever popular Battle mode will make a comeback (with, naturally, the added bonus of WiFi). As will a new option allowing people to select the same characters, which will end months of bruising dead arms for Geraint when he 'accidentally' chooses Toad or Princess Peach before Martin can manoeuvre his cursor.

So far 30 tracks (*thirty*?!) have been confirmed – around half of which will be taken from past Mario Karts, (*Super*, *64*, *Circuit* and *Double Dash*) and will feature in special Retro cups. As for weapons, well, the usual suspects are all present and correct – including the uber-cheap Bluey – as well as all new pick-ups like a special balloon that can be inflated via the DS's microphone.

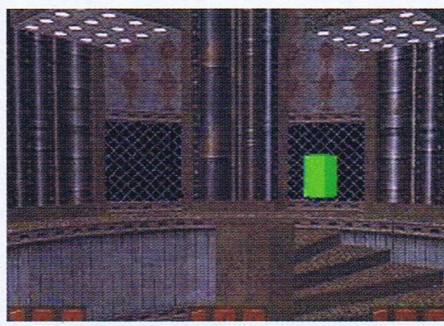
Better yet is the rumour that you'll be able to customise your kart's appearance using the touch-screen. Surely games don't come much better than this.

DOOM DS

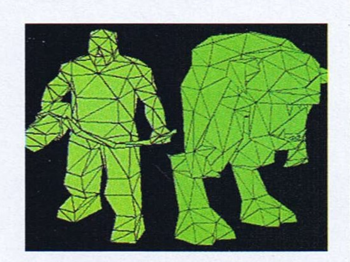
Homebrew heaven…

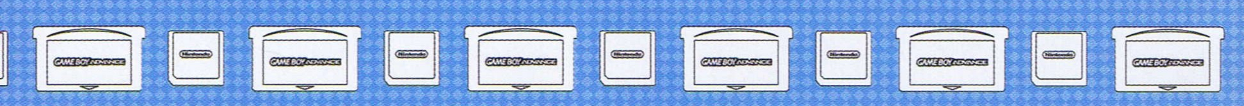
Perhaps this should be filed under 'never going to happen' – as so many homebrew projects that dance around the internet tend to do – but it's still worth a look. The project, headed by someone going by the catchy monicker of Defect, started out as a PC game, but has been in the process of being reworked for DS since June. It aims to create a fully 3D shooter (polygonal enemies rather than sprites, for example) based around the original *Doom*.

So far things look to be moving along very quickly. There are a whole load of finished textures for example, as well as polygonal models of enemies finished and undergoing optimization. You can have a look at the project as it moves from stage to stage at the following address: http://dual-soft.com/doomds/. You'll find an extensive FAQ, screenshots, regular news updates and (if you have the ability and are inclined to help) contact details to get involved.



△ It's only been a few months, but it's shaping up.







TAMAGOTCHI DS

They're back (but not in the way you're expecting…)



Courtesy of Bandai comes the latest in the long-running Tamagotchi phenomenon, *Puchi Puchi O-Misecchi* (or *Little Little Shop*, for the direct translation). Rather than taking on development duties themselves though, they've enlisted the help of Nana On Sha – a studio formed by famed designer Masaya Matsura, responsible for music-based masterpieces *Parappa the Rapper* and *Vib Ribbon*.

Unlike previous titles, the object of the game isn't to raise a pet as such – more a pet-owned store of some kind. For example, you can open a Tamagotchi dental practice (no, we're not joking), where you have to fix up visiting Tamagotchis' teeth by using the stylus on the touch-screen. The more Tamagotchis you fix up, the more money you earn and, as a result, the bigger your shop will grow. You can also open, among others, a bakery where, presumably, you'll be making bread as fast as your stylus skills will allow.

Granted, with *Nintendogs* on the way, this is hardly at the top of our import list, but, considering the development talent behind the game, we've got a sneaking suspicion that this may change. One to keep an eye out for, then.



△ You have to love the simplistic, almost amoeba-like creatures.

YOUR DS IS ONE IN A MILLION

Nintendo's handheld goes from strength to strength…



European sales of the DS have finally crossed the 1 million milestone – taking overall sales of the unit up to 6 million worldwide. Considering that the machine hasn't even been out for a year yet, this is extremely encouraging stuff. Sales continue to be strong, particularly in Japan, where a number of key titles like *Nintendogs* and adult-focused 'non-games' like *Gentle Brain Games* and *Training for Adults* continue to drive demand for the unit – more often than not above and beyond the PSP's sales. With over a month to go before Sony's handheld is released over here, and with an underwhelming catalogue of games, it seems it may have a little catching up to do…

REBELSTAR TACTICAL COMMAND

Like X-Com. Only Smaller.

It's been a long while since we've had a GBA game on these here pages – and none are more worthy than this. *Rebelstar* caught our attention because it's being developed by Codo, whose founders were responsible for the truly excellent X-Com games on the PC in the '90s. If any of you were lucky enough to play those back in the day, you'll probably be nodding in a sage-like fashion at the somewhat familiar looking screenshots above.

For the uninitiated, it's a turn-based strategy game, viewed from an isometric perspective, with a heavy emphasis on RPG elements, like levelling up characters, developing new technologies to help you in battle, and a strong story to tie everything together.

While *Tactical Command* looks simple enough in the screenshots, the brains behind it are anything but – employing a similar line-of-sight system to the X-Com games (where you can only see other units if the character you're controlling can see them) and destructible environments. The game will hopefully be out this August, so we'll have a full review next month.



△ Enemies will only reveal themselves if they're in plain sight.



△ Keep your troops alive and watch them grow in strength and accuracy.

NEWS WIRES

BAND BROS EXPANDED



While the US and Europe are still tapping their feet in frustration at the fact that Band Bros is *still* not out over here yet, the lucky Japanese are being treated to an expansion pack, adding an additional 20 tracks to the DS cart's already healthy selection. Curiously enough, the tracks are being selected by fans via a voting system on Nintendo's Japanese website. The expansion pack is actually being released on a GBA cart, which must be inserted into the DS along with the normal game card. If you've been wise enough to import the original Japanese release you can pick up the expansion on August 26th.

WORMS DS

You could class the appearance of a Worms game on a console as an inevitability, but it doesn't make the news any less well received – if only because the marriage of annelid annihilation and stylus control is a match made in heaven.

As yet, details are scarce – we don't know whether or not it will take a 3D approach to the proceedings like in recent home-console versions, or whether they'll go down the traditional side-on approach. Whatever it is, we just hope it's not going to be anything like the utterly tedious *Worms Blast* on Gamecube…

LUNAR CANNED IN EUROPE

Last month we brought you details of a DS-exclusive RPG by the name of *Lunar Genesis* (otherwise known as *Lunar: Dragon Song*). Unfortunately, no sooner had Geraint started to milk his hyperactive RPG gland, than Ubisoft had announced that they wouldn't be releasing it over here. There is a glimmer of hope, though – from what we can tell, the game will still be released in the US in the autumn so an English language version will be available eventually. It will just be a touch more expensive, that's all.



The touchable options have a nice LCD screen look to them.



Goemon meets *Tetris?*



Look! It's Mrs Goemon!

MYSTICAL NINJA STARRING GOEMON

From: KONAMI **Out:** TBC



Despite being impenetrable in terms of Japanese text, this is an absolute delight to play and, better yet, is pleasingly reminiscent of the SNES classic.

A return to form for the series then? Quite possibly. Structurally the game plays out in similar fashion to most adventure games. You have an overworld to explore, paths leading to towns and dungeons and so forth, and basic enemies to battle in the field. As in previous Goemon games, there are multiple characters to choose from, each with unique abilities. Goemon has his trusty pipe, cumbersome Ebisumaru has his powerful mallet while Sasuke, the ninja, proves the more sprightly of the characters.

Visually, it's gorgeous too, with a distinctly Japanese flavour to it – hand-drawn, watercolour backgrounds and a fixed camera that allows for more in the way of detail than a 3D engine would otherwise allow – the old N64 version looked relatively bland.

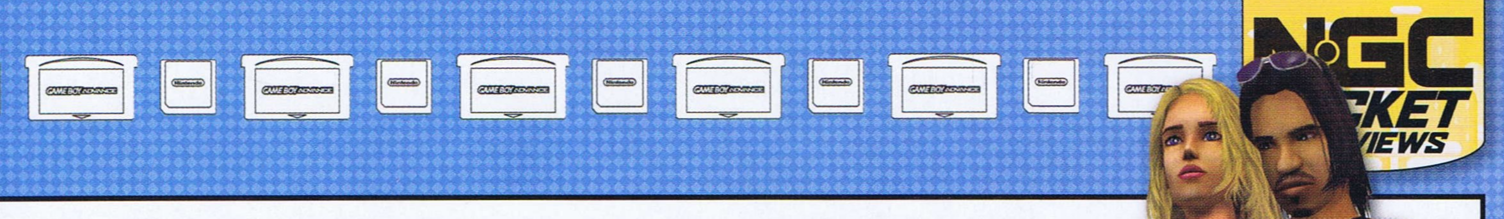
The piece de resistance though is the way the touch-screen is implemented. You can 'ping' ropes, just like in *Mario Sunshine*, to propel Goemon upwards. Circle your stylus around a mini-boss's eyes to make him dizzy and, our personal favourite, use the touch-screen as a remote control for the huge mecha 'Impact' as he smashes his way through buildings. From what we've seen so far, we like this very much…



The combination of hand-drawn backgrounds and 3D characters gives the game a stylish and unique look. Don't you just want to play this?

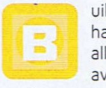


Touch screen navigation with the pipe-hitting blue-haired hero.



THE SIMS 2

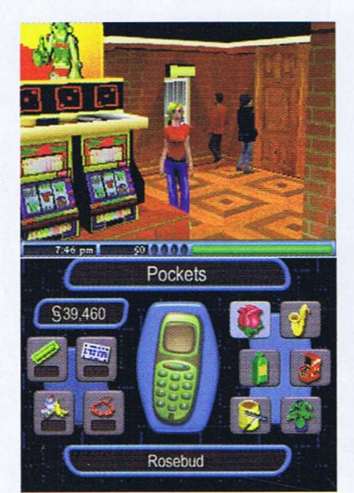
From: ELECTRONIC ARTS **Out:** NOVEMBER



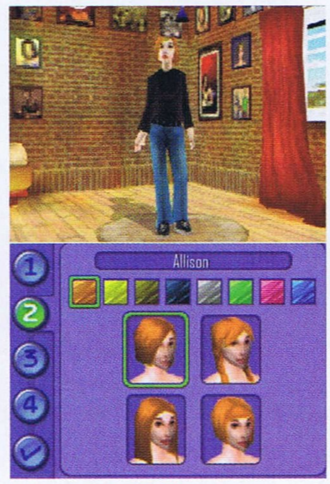
Built specifically for the DS, this has its own 3D engine that allows you to customise your avatar and, crucially, the environment around it.

It takes place in a hotel and it's up to you to customise the place to your tastes and keep it clean, with a view to making it a successful establishment. And the good news is, it makes good use of the DS's technology. You can use the microphone to create custom sounds, and blow into the mic to clean to filter bag when you're hoovering. *Chibi Robo* and now this? It would seem that cleaning is the new stealth.

Thankfully menial personal tasks, like eating and going to the loo are nowhere near as strong a focus as in previous games – freeing you up to concentrate on the good stuff.



△ Is this a hotel or a casino?



△ Bare brick walls? Very basic.



△ Makes good use of the mic.

THE LION THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

From: BUENA VISTA **Out:** NOVEMBER

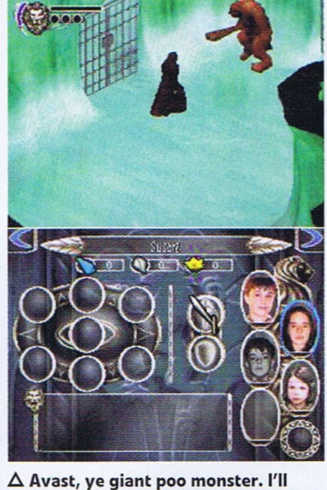


Rather than bashing out another tedious platformer-cum-puzzler, the developers have gone for an adventure not unlike *Lord Of The Rings* on GBA.

The game is all about roaming the environment and engaging in simplistic hack 'n' slash journeys which account for half your character's statistical development, with elements of character interaction and management.

Conversations with NPCs will bring up quite extensive dialogue trees, and the answers you give to questions will level up the other half of the characters' development. Giving 'nice' answers to NPCs will affect how they treat you and how they behave around you, which could mean the difference between getting attacked or receiving a new quest.

It's an interesting system, which, if handled intelligently, could make this more intriguing than you'd initially give it credit for.



△ Avast, ye giant poo monster. I'll quench me sword in thy brown gizzard.



△ This is the bit where the Famous Five go to Hogwarts for a 'keg party'.



△ You can watch pictures of missing children while you enjoy the game.






THE TOP 50 HANDHELD GAMES EVER

From the original Game Boy to the DS, here are the best portable games ever released.



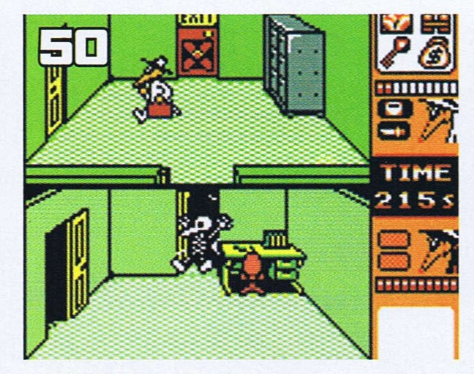
Do you know how many games have been released for Nintendo DS and the various Game Boys since 1989? No, neither do we. 1,000? 2,000? It's a lot. And between us here at NGC we've probably played them all (minus the obscure Japanese dating sims).

This year marks Game Boy's 16th birthday, and we wanted to do *something* to celebrate the little fella being old enough to get married or ride a moped (of no more than 50cc). So here it is. Those thousands of games, narrowed down to just 50: **NGC**'s definitive list of the very best games on the best handheld machines.

Sort of: Nintendo's biggest franchises, your Marios, Zeldas, Metroids and Warios of this world, are so reliably good that we could easily have filled the entire top fifty with them alone. So we've fudged the rules a bit and have included the odd series as a single entry, for example, just so that we can squeeze in as many lost classics and underrated gems as possible.

This is our personal top 50, of course. We're sure you'll have your jaw falling off in disbelief somewhere along the way (where's *Donkey Kong Country? Pokémon Pinball?*), so write in and yell at us about where we went wrong.

Close the curtains and shield your eyes: we're about to uncover a glittering pile of 50 pocketable gems...



SPY VS SPY

GBC, 1999, KEMCO
Despite the fact that it was already 15 years old by the time it was dragged from its deathbed for this handheld edition, *Spy vs Spy* has still definitely got 'it'. The game took the form of a unique battle of tricks, traps and big sticks, starring a comic duo from MAD Magazine (ask your dad). It's still a lorryload of laughs with a friend.
BEST BIT: Smacking your enemy against a wall with a spring trap.



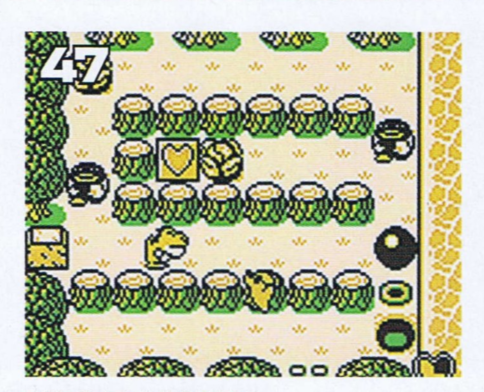
PERFECT DARK

GBC, 2000, RARE
Foxy stealthstress Joanna Dark takes a gun to the faces of both men and cyborgs in this conversion of the popular first person shooter. The result: a gratifying if unforgiveably tough bullet-fountain that only the likes of *Metal Gear* can beat, and a spectacular tribute to the original Nintendo 64 shooter. Sigh... we're going to miss you, Jo.
BEST BIT: The vast amounts of tributes to everything from *Spy Hunter* to *Operation Wolf*.



TACTICS OGRE: THE KNIGHT OF LODIS

GBA, 2001, ATLUS
Not for the impatient (the intro is a London to Edinburgh bus ride in itself), this is *Advance Wars* for the medieval warrior. With turn-based battling so deep it threatens to fall out of the bottom of the Earth, *Tactics Ogre* is rewarding for all of its 40-odd hours.
BEST BIT: Managing to create an AngelKnight before you die of old age.



MOLE MANIA

GB, 1996, NINTENDO
Just one look at the title screen, which shows a farmer blowing his top because a giant mole is showing him a cabbage, tells you that *Mole Mania* is going to be great. Each screen takes the form of a two-level puzzle and is made up of both underground and overground mazes for you to solve. Admittedly, it does look more than a little bland upon first inspection, but… hey, where did our day go?
BEST BIT: The picnic you get to go on with Mrs Mole and the kids at the end.



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

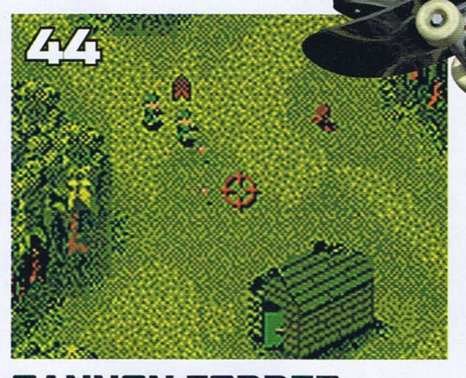
GBA, 2001, ACTIVISION
All the thrills, spills and scrapes of the grown-up version, crammed into skateparks that would fit on a handkerchief. Odd as it seems, *Pro Skater 2*'s digital double flips and pixellated pipe grinds evoke something of the *real* rush of skating – and that little 3D skater is strangely hypnotic.
BEST BIT: Skating like Hawk himself to grab New York's secret tape.

The original Cannon Fodder attracted the wrath of the British Legion and the Daily Star for using the image of a poppy in early versions.



KONAMI KRAZY RACERS

GBA, 2001, KONAMI
A launch game all but forgotten when *Mario Kart* roared in a few months later – but *KKR*'s tip-top tracks and quality control make it the only Mario Kart clone to get the formula bang-on. It's funny, too, as Konami send up their most po-faced celebs (see the mini Metal Gear Solid Ninja).
BEST BIT: Probably the fact that there's a giant Easter Island head driving a kart.



CANNON FODDER

GBC, 2000, CODEMASTERS
The hilarious Amiga game is lovingly converted to the Game Boy Color. *Cannon Fodder*'s roots are in realtime strategy – soldiers only obey orders from the roving cursor – but it's really a death-spitting walkabout where soldiers' bloodied corpses roll about the jungle, and the wounded scream loud enough to have your neighbours nervously calling the police.
BEST BIT: Impromptu troop speech: "Cup of tea anyone?", "These trousers are ruined!".



FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE

GBA, 2003, SQUARESOFT
Ostensibly a remake of a beloved SNES classic, *Tactics Advance* is improved and tidied up almost beyond recognition. The secret to its turn-based genius: a Laws system that demands that you develop a well-rounded party and – as the title implies – advanced battle tactics.
BEST BIT: Moogles. You've got to love Moogles, Kupo.



SPEEDBALL II: BRUTAL DELUXE

GBA, 2002, WANADOO
Speedball II plays a mean game of a sport that really *should* exist – it's handball but with a casualty rate that's somewhat over acceptable limits. Thrilling and challenging in ways that FIFA can only dream of, its many and varied power-ups managed to make every match a gripper.
BEST BIT: The violent scramble for points in the final seconds of a losing game.



F-ZERO MAXIMUM VELOCITY

GBA, 2001, NINTENDO
F-Zero has always been about speed, and *Maximum Velocity* isn't shy with its speedometer. The tracks – dotted with speed strips, shortcuts and a clearly illegal lack of safety barriers – are terrific time trial material. Although the brutally dishonest CPU competitors did make us weep for mum…
BEST BIT: The track-halving shortcut – boost, left and *juuuump* – on Clouds Carpet.



METAL GEAR SOLID

GBC, 2000, KONAMI
Solid Snake feels right at home tucked in your pocket, delivering all the sneaking, dog-dodging and chauvinist lady-chat that we have come to expect over the years. There are a host of neat touches (for God's sake, why didn't someone warn us that wheat fields rustle?), and the VR training missions are pretty much an entire game in themselves.
BEST BIT: Tip-toeing around birds to avoid the feathered funsters alerting the guards.





DOOM

GBA, 2001, ACTIVISION
A bloody marathon of guns, zombies and the old exploding barrels trick, *Doom* effortlessly tears its first-person rivals a new one. The terror of hearing the snuffling of a nearby mutant or tip-toeing around a darkened corner to come face-to-face with a demon can't match the PC version – but it's close.
BEST BIT: Meeting your first Baron of Hell – and then running far, far away.



SUPER MONKEY BALL JR

GBA, 2002, SEGA
This could easily have gone so wrong – we would have bet a banana that Super Monkey Ball would fail without analogue controls. But it's an absolute riot, with level upon level of teeth-clenchingly tense monkey fun, and some of the clearest, brightest 3D on the GBA.
BEST BIT: Monkey Bowling made the transition intact.



RACING GEARS ADVANCE

GBA, 2005, ORBITAL MEDIA
Anyone who reckoned you needed proper 3D for a real racing game was shut right up by *Racing Gears*: silky tracks, competitors who feel like they're really racing rather than following GBA orders, and a virtual supermarket filled with weapons.
BEST BIT: Driving across fields of cabbages. Just us?



GAME & WATCH GALLERY 3

GBC, 1999, NINTENDO
Twenty vintage LCD reaction tests in one tiny little box, *Gallery 3* works because of some lovingly crafted updates (the new version of *Egg* cracks us up) and the timeless quality of such simple games. Take *Flagman*: four frames of animation *in total*, but it leaves you giggling like a chimp.
BEST BIT: The brain-bubbling two-character confusion of *Lion*.

WARIOLAND 4

GBA, 2001, NINTENDO
Trust Wario to turn gaming on its head – his ability to *benefit* rather than suffer from the touch of wandering enemies has made Warioland a classy series throughout. Edition four was a flawless product from the Nintendo platforming factory, with mad minigames and panicky end-of-level race chases. Waaah!
BEST BIT: The bosses: inflatable teddy bear with a rat on top, anyone?

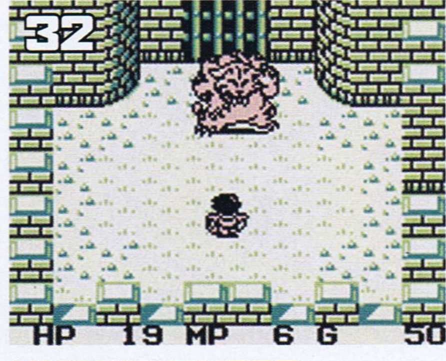


KURU KURU KURURIN

GBA, 2001, NINTENDO
Criminally, this Nintendo action-puzzle gem sold like cakes made of poo. Yet we've rarely been so hooked, squeezing our big, rotating stick through corridors that some joker thought were ideal for big, rotating sticks. You end up hunched over a level shaving *milliseconds* at a time off your personal best.
BEST BIT: Earning the full complement of flying birdies that sit atop your rod.

PARASOL STARS

GB, 1991, OCEAN
Part three of Taito's holy Bub 'n' Bob trilogy was clearly put together by hands of love for GB. Sure, enemies are missing and the bonus fruit is four dots big – but the frantic play is intact, with chubby kids using umbrellas to swat enemies into oblivion. Think that's cute? You should hear the music.
BEST BIT: A shower of oversized fruit, courtesy of the magical cane power-up.



MYSTIC QUEST

GB, 1991, SQUARESOFT
Although *Sword of Mana* offers you the same game in unrecognisably enhanced form, purists prefer the original. The Zelda-style adventuring is, arguably, much nicer to be around than Final Fantasy's usual takey-turny nonsense, and it looks the business. Big old bosses, too.
BEST BIT: The start. You, the words 'Now fight!' and – suddenly – a very large monster.



MARIO GOLF: ADVANCE TOUR

GBA, 2004, NINTENDO
Tee'd off with the lack of Mario? Not a bit of it. Mazza's absence just gives the glittering play centre-stage. Whether you're the golfing type or not, making ball meet hole is an irresistible challenge – and the fact that there's an entire RPG holding *Mario Golf* together just adds to the appeal. But, by crikey, does it talk.
BEST BIT: *Toadstool Tour*'s tricky ring challenge reborn in glorious 2D.



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA THE MINISH CAP

GBA, 2004, NINTENDO
Seemingly exhausted from their double-cart extravaganza, *Oracle of Ages/Seasons*, Capcom turned out a much shorter, much easier game. But the 'Honey, I Shrunk The Link' gimmick is a great one, and you'll rarely find more secrets and side-quests in a game.
BEST BIT: The Gust Jar's power to suck in and push away objects.



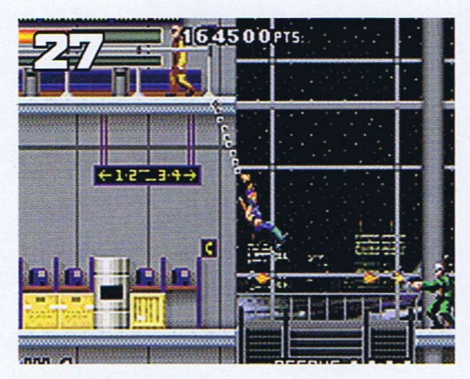
POP 'N MUSIC: ANIMATED MELODY

GBC, 2000, KONAMI
Packed with songs you don't know from cartoons you haven't seen, *Pop 'n' Music* is the best game you've never played. An arcade hit turned Japan-only porta-miracle, it's Dance Dance Revolution for the fingers, asking you to tap in time to music from animes like Getter Robo and Captain Harlock.
BEST BIT: Getting anything approaching a decent score on a five-star song.



GOLDEN SUN

GBA, 2001, NINTENDO
Hamstrung by random battles that never seem to end, *Golden Sun* still shines brighter than most rival RPGS, including those on full-size consoles. With an intriguing story and a cast you actually *care* about, plus the ingenious Pokémon-style Djinn, there's so much crammed in we half expected the cart to explode in our faces.
BEST BIT: Hearing about the Colosseum – and slowly realising *you'll* be fighting in it.



NINJA COP

GBA, 2003, KONAMI
Wriggling out of every genre you try to stuff it into, *Ninja Cop* is a bit like a platformer, sort of like an action-puzzle thing – but one thing it definitely is, is a foot in the face for chart-clogging licensed rubbish, with mucho bullet-dodging and ceiling-swinging across impeccable level designs. And the music is, quite simply, *brilliant*.
BEST BIT: The exquisite death animation on the tiny little frogs you have to murder.



ASTRO BOY: OMEGA FACTOR

GBA, 2003, SEGA
Whenever Japanese shoot-'em-up maniacs Treasure get their hands on something, it turns instantly to gold. *Astro Boy* is a bit like *Viewtiful Joe* for the Game Boy, but with more guns and cuter robots. Relentlessly paced, there's a surprise around every corner (and behind most windows). Dynamite.
BEST BIT: The transforming animal-boss at the end of level two.



CASTLEVANIA: ARIA OF SORROW

GBA, 2003, KONAMI
Shorter and faster than its brothers, *Aria of Sorrow* lays the atmosphere on with a shovel – and with pitch-perfect platforming action, keeps you playing well past the witching hour. Experimenting with the enemy powers you've sucked up is endless fun, even after you've done in Drac.
BEST BIT: Both the name and the destructive power of the Bastard Sword.





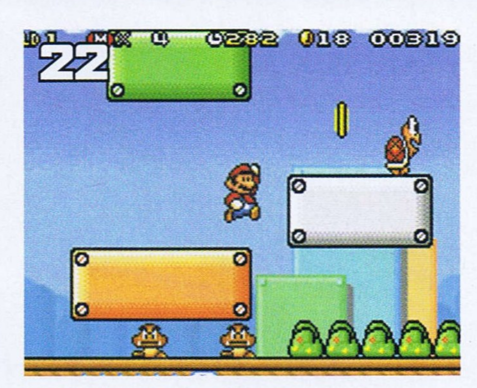
WARLOCKED

GBC, 2000, NINTENDO
Irritatingly, this utterly marvellous piece of realtime strategy, developed in London by Bits Studios, was only released in the US. Seek it out. From the moment you've got four of your men obligingly ferrying wood and gold back and forth, you're hooked. A masterwork of knights, wizards, compact levels and secrets aplenty.
BEST BIT: Chickenwiz – the wizard that turns your enemies into chickens.



CHU CHU ROCKET

GBA, 2001, SEGA
Squeaking into stores on the same day as the Game Boy Advance itself, this Sega puzzler – originally a launch game for their ill-fated Dreamcast – involves guiding mice to safety via the power of arrows. It has about a billion levels, plus one of the most chaotic and addictive reasons we ever had to nearly strangle ourselves in link cable spaghetti.
BEST BIT: The electronic miaow/purr of those mechanical cats. Brrr.



SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 4

GBA, 2003, NINTENDO
It's hard to believe that original NES gamers had to complete *Super Mario Bros 3* without saving: it's a *colossal* game that's essentially the world's most exciting lecture in level design. There isn't a block out of place, and the familiar run-jump-bash idea is dragged in so many directions it makes you dizzy.
BEST BIT: Cannonballs and Bullet Bills aboard the Koopa Airships.



SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 3

GBA, 2002, NINTENDO
The ear-bleeding scream of Baby Mario is really all that holds this back from perfection. Originally a swansong for the dying Super Nintendo, it shows Nintendo at the peak of its powers: introducing a new idea at every step, before throwing it straight out in favour of an even better one. Stunning.
BEST BIT: The drunken Yoshi staggering around after you've touched Fuzzy.



STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3

GBA, 2002, CAPCOM
After 19 years of excellence, it's hard to imagine anyone stealing Street Fighter's glorious 2D crown. There are 31 fighters at the mercy of your fingers in *Alpha 3*, and an intelligent button layout makes play as fluid as the streams of sweat leaking from your aching, throbbing palms.
BEST BIT: Beat Arcade mode three times and you'll unlock Evil Ryu.



HARVEST MOON

GBA, 2003, NATSUME
Grabbing you by the udders and refusing to let go, *Harvest Moon* managed to prove that it *is* possible to fall hard and fast for a farming game. Its genius lay in forcing you to do your crop-watering, animal-tending chores while dangling a world full of distractions – mining, festivals, marriage – in your face.
BEST BIT: The very real and loving bond you form with your dog.



METROID: FUSION/ ZERO MISSION

GBA, 2002/2004, NINTENDO
Some of Nintendo's best work is wrapped up in these two spectacular platformers. *Fusion* is arguably the better of the two – tougher and cleverer than the rejigged NES quest in *Zero Mission*, and with a parasitic twist that breathes new life into Samus's super-fluid 2D bug hunting.
BEST BIT: The 2001-style twist delivered by *Fusion*'s computer, Adam.



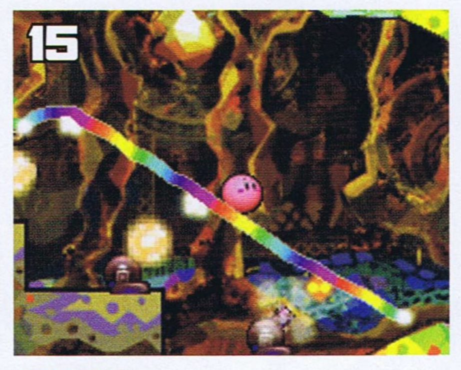
MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT

GBA, 2001, NINTENDO
Equal parts *Mario Kart 64* and *Super Mario Kart*, *Super Circuit* is a polished-until-it-gleams take on the karting template that Nintendo invented. There's endless time trialling potential in its sexy curves, and you'll actually clap with glee when you unlock the tracks from the Super Nintendo granddaddy.
BEST BIT: It is, and always will be, squashing someone after the lightning has struck.



SUPER MARIO LAND 2

GB, 1992, NINTENDO
The original game was certainly a struggle (exploding Koopas?) but the sequel is comfortingly brilliant, with Nintendo designers letting their imagination run riot in areas like the Mario-shaped Mario Zone. Nintendo's finest actually stashed away all kinds of treats – then, crucially, left you to experience the thrill of uncovering them all.
BEST BIT: Mario in space! For the superb, free-floating Space Zone.



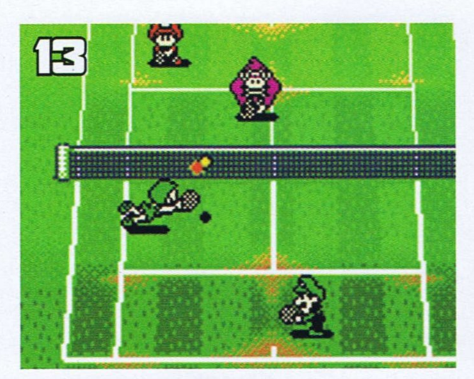
KIRBY: CANVAS CURSE

DS, 2005, NINTENDO
Star of some of Nintendo's most embarrassing moments, Kirby struck paydirt with *Canvas Curse* – making better use of the DS than almost anyone. The enemy gobbling is still there, but the stylus is used to fantastic effect as you draw paths for Kirby to roll around on. Simple idea, but it masks hidden depths.
BEST BIT: The frantic races against big moving walls of death.



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA LINK'S AWAKENING DX

GBC, 1998, NINTENDO
Colourised version of the original Game Boy adventure, this is an absolutely huge quest for such a small cart, sparkling with Zelda magic and memorably difficult – how many times did we get knocked off the top of Eagle's Tower by the eponymous bird? The ending was obvious all along, of course.
BEST BIT: Killing that bird.



MARIO TENNIS

GBC, 2000, NINTENDO
The N64 version used only two buttons, so it was no surprise to see this near-replica work like a charm – top control over your lobs, backhands and volleys equals super-slick play. Your opponents are able to make you look like Henman, but the minigames have some kicking for your ass, too.
BEST BIT: Luigi's rock-hard Shooting Star minigame. Cushion-chucking stuff.

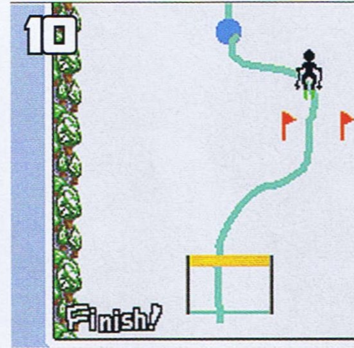


POKÉMON RUBY/ SAPPHIRE

GBA, 2002, NINTENDO
Is there anyone who hasn't burned their eyes out with 'just one more hour' of first-class exploring, collecting and battling? The Pokémon concept is one of gaming's true classics, and *Ruby/Sapphire* ups the Pokémon to a number roughly equalling the population of Brazil.
BEST BIT: Heading below ground and bumping into the 'mon on the box.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA AGES/SEASONS

GBC, 2001, NINTENDO
Capcom's *Oracle* games are crammed with great ideas, not least the 64 different rings that alter Link's abilities and turn the *Oracle* games into a catch-'em-all quest to rival The Big P. And by unlocking items in one game in exchange for passwords from the other, Capcom made sure we bought both. Cads.
BEST BIT: Finding the rings that transform you into your enemies.



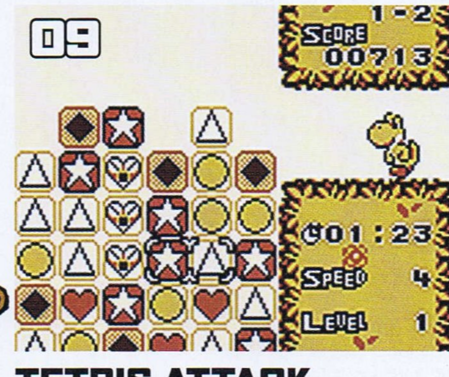
WARIO WARE TOUCHED!

DS, 2004, NINTENDO
It doesn't feel *quite* as natural – or make you laugh quite as much – as its GBA daddy, but *Touched*'s quickfire rollercoaster of 200-odd minigames sees Nintendo's imagination machine working at maximum juice. The mountain of toys, games and distractions is what DS is all about.
BEST BIT: The unlockable Pet Parrot toy that repeats what you say.



Bits Studios has had a sequel to Warlocked – called Wizards – on the backburner for around six years. We've played it: it's good.





TETRIS ATTACK

GBC, 1996, NINTENDO
Some of the most fluid puzzling you'll ever see. You're almost sucked into the screen as you string together combo after combo, with your eyes darting around so fast they threaten to roll right out of your skull. The cart's a must because it stacks up a tower of challenges – you can pit your wits against your Game Boy, clear below a certain line, or solve a long series of puzzles.
BEST BIT: Matching up six tiles in a row for big money. We call it a 'sixer'.



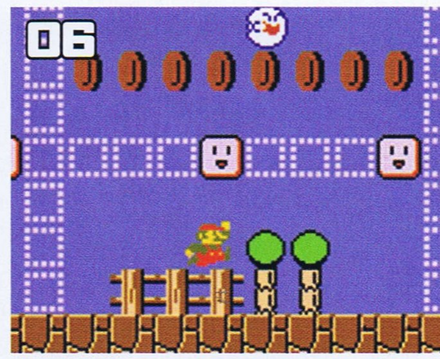
SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2

GBA, 2001, NINTENDO
Proof that there's more inventiveness in Miyamoto's eyebrow hair than in other developers' entire bodies, this classic does everything imaginable with the simple concept of a plumber bashing blocks and stomping on turtles. From platform rides on Yoshi's back to the torture of Star World, *SMA 2* is consistently top-notch.
BEST BIT: The music going nuts as you hop aboard Yoshi for the first time.

07

METEOS

DS, 2005, BANDAI
Simple to explain: match coloured blocks to create columns of three. But it's what happens next – the blocks blasting off and struggling against gravity – that sends *Meteos* into the stratosphere. Blocks fall faster than your eyes can cope with, so in your head you're already giving up. But also planning your next go. It's almost criminally addictive.
BEST BIT: Clearing an entire screen with a few well-placed swipes of the stylus. Satisfying.



SUPER MARIO BROS DELUXE

GBC, 1999, NINTENDO
So, look: even the rosiest-eyed '80s freak would have to admit that, standing on its own, the original *Super Mario Bros* isn't the best Mario game. But hold this cart in your hands and *feel* the weight of the extras. The completeness of this package puts all the *Super Mario Advances* to shame. Plus the game itself is pure gold.
BEST BIT: Beating the toughest ghost on the You vs Boo level race.



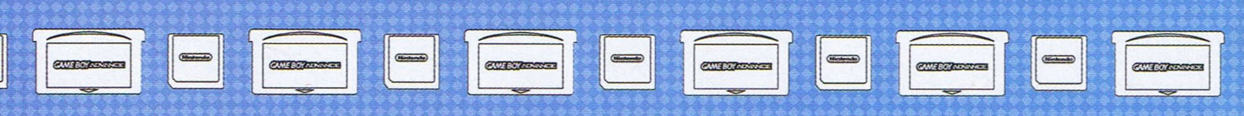
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA FOUR SWORDS

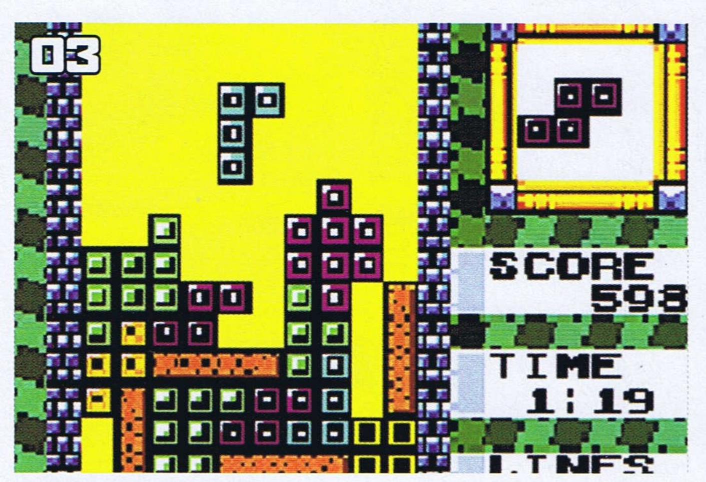
GBA, 2002, NINTENDO
This and *Ocarina of Time* will forever be battling it out for the title of Best Zelda Ever. Trekking between dark and light worlds, Link unravels a plot so gripping it staples you to your seat. But wait! There's also a link-up epic, too. One of the best single-player games, *and* one of the best multiplayers? Nintendo spoil you.
BEST BIT: Finding out what happens when a chicken loses its patience.



MARIO & LUIGI SUPERSTAR SAGA

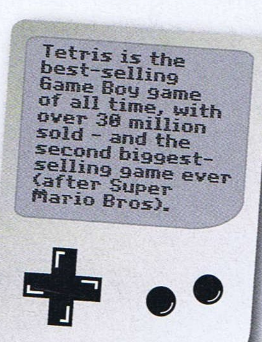
GBA, 2003, NINTENDO
Nintendo does *comedy*? Don't knock it until you've experienced the embarrassment of laughing out loud on the bus. *Mario & Luigi* doesn't just use the 'tache twins in ingenious new ways – it has Nintendo poking fun at itself. The boss battles could have done with a little less monotony, but otherwise it's spectacular.
BEST BIT: We'll never forget Mario emerging from the shower wearing just his pants. We've tried.

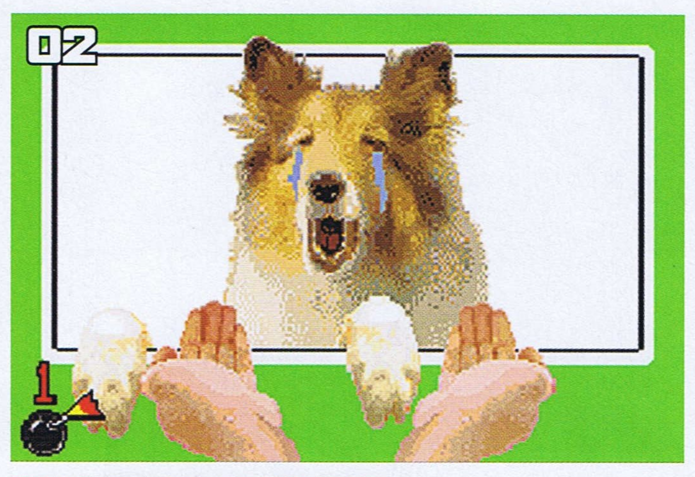


TETRIS DX

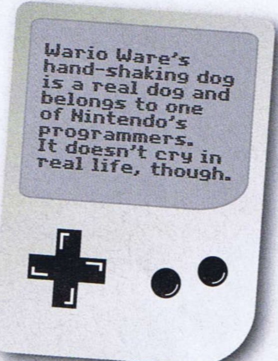
GBC, 1998, NINTENDO
Originally created as the spare-time project of a Russian engineer, *Tetris* remains the undisputed king of puzzlers – despite Nintendo twisting the concept on its head for endless wannabes in the '90s – and seems like the title the GB was invented for. This beefed-up, colourised take on the black-and-white original is the second-best version ever (after the N64's *The New Tetris*). As the blocks stack up, it still has the power to bring out the sweats in even the calmest gamer – and give you that 'blocks before your eyes' pre-sleep phenomenon.
BEST BIT: Three players can store their scores – tit-for-tat *Tetris* ensues.





WARIO WARE MEGA MICROGAMES

GBA, 2003, NINTENDO
Not just one of the best and most original ideas Nintendo – or *anyone* – has had in ages, *Wario Ware* is so many good things at once: fast, original, inventive and rammed with extras. It leaves everyone who plays it breathlessly jabbering about the best bits to unconverted chums – 'You shake hands with a dog and it cries if you get it wrong!', 'You have to saw through a bit of wood, and there's a bloke doing sit-ups inside!' – and in visuals and concept, every one of its 200 minigames offers something surprising, clever or laugh-out-loud funny. Plus, of course, it's got Wario in. We love him.
BEST BIT: We'll always have a special place in our hearts for that dog.



01 ADVANCE WARS





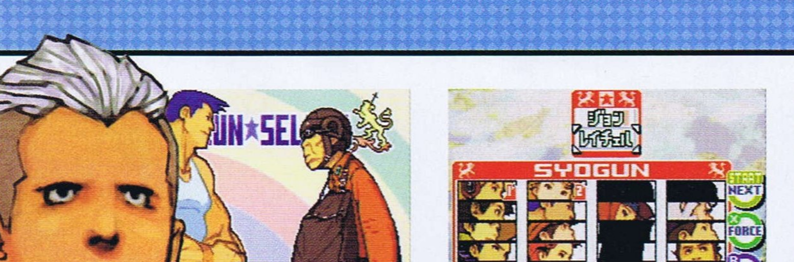


GBA/DS, 2001-2005, NINTENDO
Basically, it's paper, scissors, stone. In all its incarnations, *Advance Wars* plays by very, very simple rules. Tank beats infantry. Bomber beats tank. Missile beats bomber. It's so easy to understand – and such a satisfying problem – that we once sat for ten hours squashing enemy forces with extreme prejudice.

Intelligent Systems' ability to tweak this simple concept a tiny amount for each level – throwing up different combinations of terrain, weather and enemy troops to make each level a fresh and unique challenge – is a miracle. The difficulty is ramped up so subtly you hardly notice, and the game has an atmosphere all its own – the frivolous banter between commanders and the heart-rending cuteness of even the meatiest tank makes *Advance Wars* so much easier to love than all that po-faced PC strategy nonsense.

Perfectly suited for the Game Boy (even though it was invented for the NES), *Advance Wars* is undoubtedly the best handheld game ever.
BEST BIT: All of it.









△ Buy what you can afford now or wait a couple of turns for something better.

ADVANCE WARS DUAL STRIKE



FROM: NINTENDO **PLAYERS:** 1-8 **SINGLE CART LINK:** YES
OUT: NOW (JAP) AUGUST 22 (US) SEPT 30 (UK) **COST:** ¥4,800 (£24)

Getting strategic with the new best game on Nintendo DS…

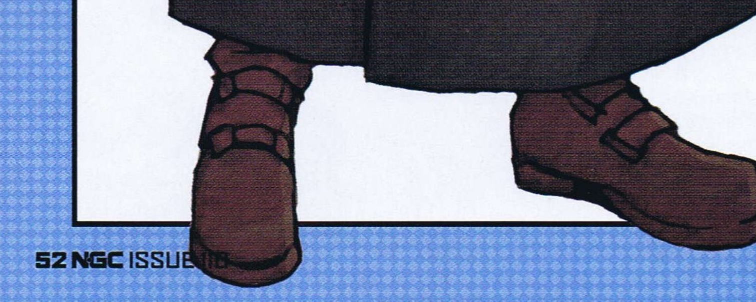


Back when Nintendo decreed that handheld gaming was to head for a brave new world of touchable screens and voice recognition, we braced ourselves for an onslaught of improbable new experiences. We expected the unexpected, and we were blown away by the likes of *Project Rub*, *Wario Ware Touched*, *Nintendogs* and *Electroplankton*. But the last thing we were prepared for was the possibility that the best and most substantial game for DS would be something that barely made use of the machine's much vaunted features.

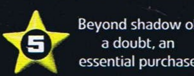
Advance Wars Dual Strike proves that unless there's a very good reason for making people blow on the microphone while drawing shapes on the screen, it really isn't a sin to put 'normal' games on DS.

> **"THE BEST GAME FOR DS BARELY MAKES USE OF ITS SPECIAL FEATURES"**

And not only does *Dual Strike*



NGC POCKET 5 STAR SCORING EXPLAINED



Beyond shadow of a doubt, an essential purchase



Definitely recommended.



Okay, but not a disaster if you miss out.



Disappointing and a waste of good money.



The gaming equivalent of a venereal disease.



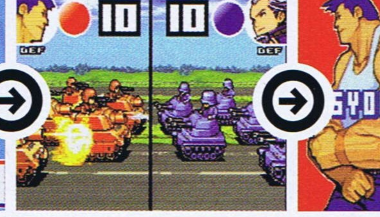
CLASH OF THE TITANS



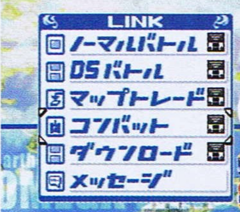
Even if your mates don't own a copy of the game, you can have wireless multiplayer battles with up to seven opponents and allies. Takes ages, mind.





















BATTLE STATIONS

With each new map you play, the Advance Wars cortex in the middle of your brain grows bigger and more deadly. Which is probably why we keep scoring S-ranks so often.

RANGEFINDER

Always check the attack and movement ranges of any enemy units nearby. The clumsiest mistake you can make is to move far enough forward to become an easy target for mobile units such as helicopters and anti-aircraft guns. Then again, sometimes you might want to lure the enemy into your clutches by sending out a cheap but tempting sacrifice…



FOG OF WAR

In maps with fog of war enabled, you can only see for a limited radius around each unit. Recon units can see further than others and soldiers perched atop a mountain have an excellent view, but there's no way to see what's hiding in the fog unless you bump into a hidden unit while moving. Units stashed in woodland stay hidden until something touches them.









make scant use of the DS's uniqueness, it also looks barely distinguishable from the two GBA versions that preceded it. Granted, you have two maps on simultaneous display, which is something a GBA couldn't do, but the one in the upper screen is usually held in suspended animation while you take care of business on the lower screen. Barring only the wireless link-up features, the entire thing could have been done on the older machine without sacrificing any gameplay or graphical detail.

You won't wow anybody with this – at least not in the kind of way you can with the irresistible *Wario Ware* – but as a proper, meaty sort of game that poses a genuine challenge and offers countless hours of enjoyment, it's incredibly good. If somebody accidentally spilled superglue on top of our DS's cartridge slot, we wouldn't mind as long as *Dual Strike* was the game permanently stuck there.

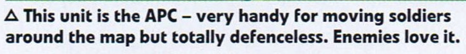
(Speaking of glued cartridges, the reason all the pictures here are from the Japanese version, *Famicom Wars DS*, is because our UK copy arrived security-taped into a DS, instantly thwarting our hopes of taking any English language screenshots. Having played through both versions, we decided to make this a kind of half-Jap, half-English review).

For those who haven't experienced one of the many Wars titles in the past, this is turn-based strategy for people who've never had the urge to roll a 12-sided die or paint realistic eyeballs on a fingernail-sized lead model of Napoleon. Simple enough to learn in just a few minutes, yet deep enough to require hours of thought, *Dual Strike* is warfare with a heavy sprinkling of magic Nintendo dust.

At its most basic, there are two opposing armies, a few buildings to capture and a pair of headquarters representing the ultimate objective. Capturing buildings gives you money, which can be used for making new tanks, soldiers, warplanes and other reinforcements. Capture the enemy HQ or destroy all of his army to win the round.

Each type of unit, from





△ This unit is the APC – very handy for moving soldiers around the map but totally defenceless. Enemies love it.



SURVIVAL KID

New for Dual Strike, the survival mode is a test of your staying power. You have a series of maps to play through (11 to begin with) and limited time, turns or money in which to beat them all. Play with money as the limiting factor and you can zoom through the first few maps by building battleships and the new, ludicrously powerful, painfully expensive megatank. But you'll run out of cash when the going gets tougher. It's a unique tactical experience.









SIZE MATTERS

Some of the larger maps can take a couple of hours to finish once you have all of the unit types at your disposal, although it rarely feels like you've spent that long trying. Sleepless nights, here we come.









humble foot soldier to mighty battleship, has a limited movement range and can only attack enemies within a certain radius – most of them have to be touching the enemy before they can do anything. After moving all of your soldiers, or units, you declare your turn over and wait to see what your opponent does. If you didn't move close enough to attack, you'll need to have stayed far enough away to avoid being hit. It's a game of cat and mouse as you attempt to draw the enemy into a deadly trap, turn by turn.

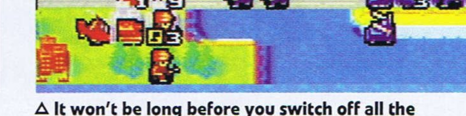
With a total of 25 types of unit, divided into land, sea and air forces, there's a huge variety of tactical possibilities. Each unit is highly effective against certain others but will get instantly defeated when it goes head to head with the wrong foe. So you might have, for example, a battle copter which can wipe out an enemy tank with ease, but if that tank is supported by an anti-aircraft unit then to attack it is to sacrifice your copter on the next turn – unless you're backed up by something that



"IT'S A GAME OF CAT AND MOUSE AS YOU ATTEMPT TO DRAW THE ENEMY INTO A DEADLY TRAP"



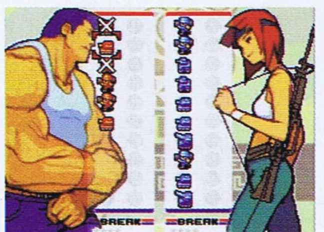
△ Bombers are still among the most useful and expensive of units. If you make a squadron of them, you're well on the way to victory.



△ It won't be long before you switch off all the battle and capture animations. They're too slow.

COMBAT MODE

Advance Wars becomes a shoot-'em-up in this bizarre new minigame for DS.



Choose your favourite CO, bearing in mind that his special power will have a somewhat different effect here, and spend 20,000 cash on a selection of units. You can pick from tanks, recons, artillery or mechs.



Send a single unit out into the battlefield to face multiple computer enemies. You move around in realtime using the D-pad, and tap with the stylus to shoot. Your guns fire at the exact point where you touch the screen.



Stop on cities for a few seconds to capture them, chip away at the enemy's units by constantly shooting, and replace destroyed units with ones from your reserve stock. Can you finish all six maps in one go?



△ Max, our favourite character, powers up his tanks and ground units.



△ There's a sparkle when powering up. This is as flashy as the game ever gets.

△ End a turn by swapping COs. This helps charge up both special powers.

can cover your own weaknesses.

You also get a performance boost or penalty depending on what type of terrain your units occupy. Those in cities, mountains or woodland deal extra damage to those in open areas, which can mean the difference between weakening an enemy unit and defeating it outright. Damaged units can recover two of their ten hit points each turn if they're holed up in a friendly building.

Of course if *Dual Strike* was as purely strategic and chess like as it probably sounds, it wouldn't be much of a Nintendo game. That's where the special CO powers come into play.

You have a character called a Commanding Officer in charge of your army – you can usually choose your favourite from the ones you've unlocked. Each CO is strong in some areas and weak in others – one might wield enhanced tanks at the expense of aerial mobility, while another might have better range but weaker soldiers. After dealing sufficient damage you can activate the CO power, which can be anything from doubling attack power to changing the weather or even generating new units in every allied city.

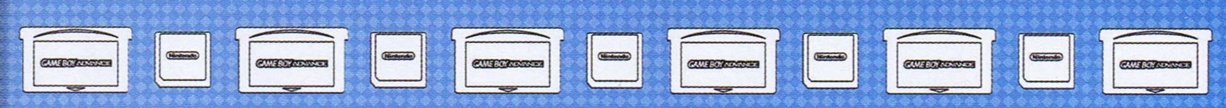
On the DS there's a whole new level of CO powers, thanks to the addition of a second front – an extra map which you play between turns on the main one. You can send units from the main front to help your ally, and if he wins (you can have the computer play for you if it's all too confusing) then he'll join you until you win the rest of the level.

Which might not take long. With a second CO you can activate the tag team option, enabling both CO powers simultaneously and allowing you move twice in one turn. The game is doubly difficult to beat when you're facing two COs, so the second front will be every bit as hard-fought as the first – the winner walks away with a major advantage.

In general, the game is extremely well



△ This thing is amazingly powerful. Normal tanks don't stand a chance.



POWERING UP

There's a nice sort of start-up sequence when you switch on the game, showing the beautiful manga artwork (which is the same as on the GBA). You can also buy new backgrounds for the title screen to alter the appearance.



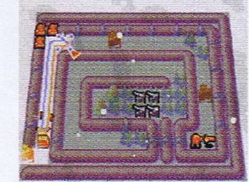


△ You can combine any two maps to play in Free Battle mode.









CHECK OUT MY UNIT

Six things no army commander would ever leave home without…



MEGATANK
Rival COs weep at the sight of it. Battle-hardened veterans fill their pants at the sound of its mighty engine. This thing is the business. Buy one today.



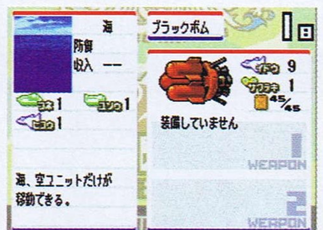
B BOAT
Rather less exciting than the murderous megatank, this troop-carrying submarine can repair your damaged navy, restoring one hit point per round.



RUNNER
This new unit is like a rocket launcher with superior range and very poor movement. It can only travel along the rail it sits upon, making it vulnerable to fast units.



STEALTH
Much like an ordinary bomber except with the brilliant option of hiding like a submarine. If you can keep your stealth airforce refuelled, you're laughing.



B BOMB
This one is like an aircraft filled with explosive. In fact that's exactly what it is. Otherwise known as a missile, right? Anyway, it blows up and hurts things.



CARRIER
A pretty advanced tactical option. It carries and shelters aircraft, as you might expect, and packs missiles that are highly effective against aerial attackers.

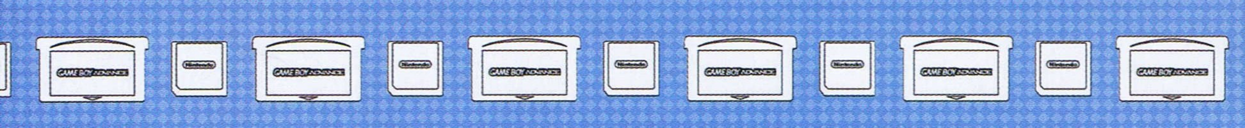
balanced. With each new version of Advance Wars comes a handful of new unit types, and this time some changes have been made to address issues from the last edition – in particular, to combat the too-powerful neotank. The solution to that particular problem is the megatank, which can exterminate pretty much anything with a single shot. The downside is a limited range and the certainty of running out of ammo if you use them to venture too deep into enemy territory.

Similar changes have been made to other units, and the addition of a stealth bomber – effectively an airborne submarine – offers something completely new to think about. Having a couple of them on your side, picking off unsuspecting enemies with stealthy precision, makes you feel like a god.

Other DS additions include the option to control your army using the stylus. When we first heard about that, we assumed a bit of stylus control would be the perfect thing for *Advance Wars*. In reality it's quite fiddly and introduces the risk of making accidental moves – there's still no undo feature for correcting honest mistakes, so make sure you save often. Using the D-pad is faster and easier.

> **"IF YOU DON'T OWN A DS, IT'S WORTH BUYING ONE JUST FOR ADVANCE WARS DUAL STRIKE"**

Fans of the series won't be surprised to learn that many maps from previous versions have been reused. They're classics pieces of game design, and the new units do make them marginally different to








△ On this map the upper screen is used to display a countdown timer.



△ When there are no factories on the second front, send units from the first via bases or your HQ building.

play. The music and artwork are also the same as the GBA versions – that and the lack of any online options are the only things we could find to complain about in *Dual Strike*.

If you own a DS, you *need* this game. If you don't own a DS, it's worth buying one for it.

Regardless of how much you've played it on GBA or how dull you might think turn-based strategy will be, this is the number one game on the system right now. And unless they do an online sequel, we can't imagine ever getting tired of it.

MARTIN KITTS



DESIGN ROOM

Run out of built-in maps? Draw your own using the power of art...





ETCH-A-SKETCH

You're given a default map to begin with, but to make things easier you should wipe it all clean with a solid wash of land or water. Or you could get a random selection of terrain tiles and see if it offers any inspiration. This is all exactly the same as it was in the GBA versions, of course.

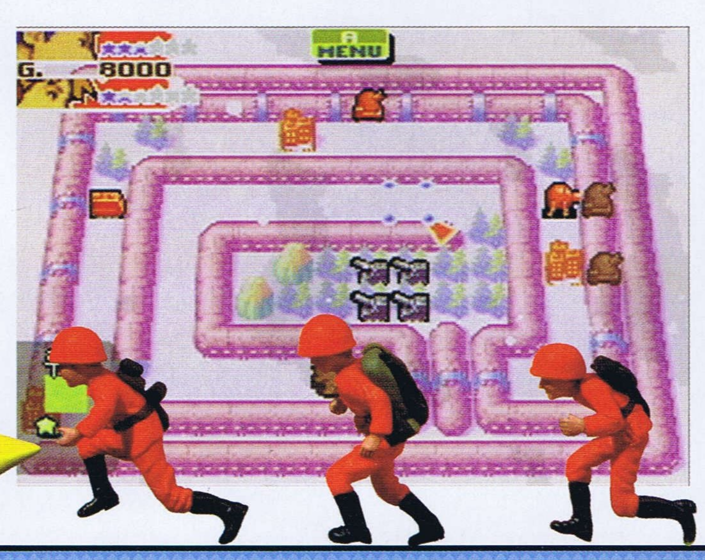
MAKE IT FUNKY

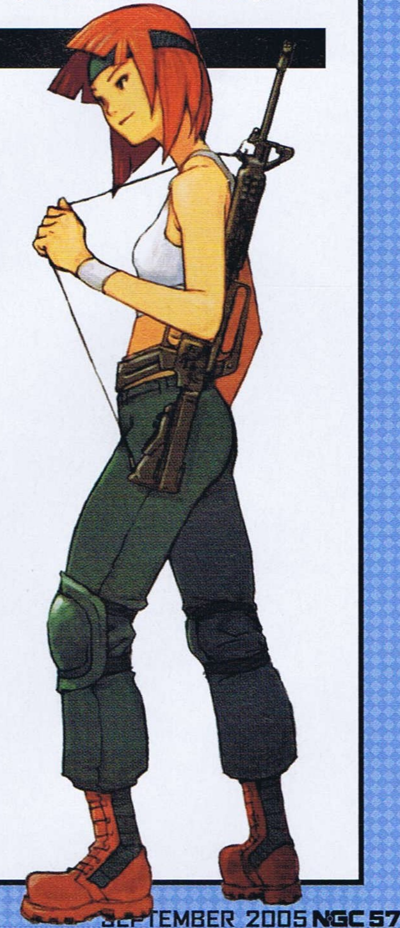
Where the map editor of Dual Strike differs from previous incarnations is in the use of the touchy screen. It's responsive enough to allow you to draw shapes without skipping bits, although you'll need a steady hand to avoid drawing on the dividing line between two tiles. Which messes things up.

COCK THE HAMMER

Before you can play your personalised map you'll have to satisfy certain minimum requirements – a couple of bases and at least two factories or two opposing units. Alternatively, fill the map with as many soldiers, warships, tanks and aircraft as the game can handle – bye bye, strategy!









GOLDENEYE ROGUE AGENT

Rogue Agent may have been mediocre on Gamecube, but on DS it works. Just.



FROM: EA **PLAYERS:** 1-4 **SINGLE CART LINK:** YES
MICROPHONE: NO **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £30



△ Blam! The enemies in *Rogue Agent* die pretty spectacularly.

The grave-dancing, V-flicking, thoroughly repellent use of the name still hurts, even if you never dropped into the bogs in Facility or hot-footed it around the Cradle, but we'll give EA their dues: *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent* seems to broadly work as a first-person shooter on the DS, and even manages to improve it in some areas.

Okay, so the improvements haven't turned it into a must-have FPS, but a streamlining of the gameplay has worked well, particularly the use of the GoldenEye itself, which was both pointless and useless in the Gamecube version. There's also a vein-popping but nonetheless really quite innovative



Δ **Oh yes. Admittedly, this is overkill, but the rocket launcher becomes necessary later on when you have to deal with 'copters.**



Δ **We love the way the guy on the right just looks on unflustered.**



Δ **The typically Bond locations are about the most 007 thing in this.**



Δ **Being a scumbag, you're happy dealing with Goldfinger and Dr No.**

Δ **And, in all probability, he missed.**

THINGS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMM

Three things that don't quite sit right…





ENEMY AI

This is a mixed bag. Occasionally, bad guys will surprise you by nipping for cover as they see you coming, sometimes they'll just stand there and wait for their punishment. Some of the AI feels a little unfair too: witness the unprovoked, all-powerful attack by rocket-firing helicopter on mission three.

MUSIC

Sure, no one cares about the music, and neither did we until we got to the Hong Kong missions and suddenly heard the craziest, most ill-suited music we've ever given ear-time to. We think it's a plinky-plonk rendition of the Gamecube tune, but it sounds more like someone playing an easy listening CD.

LENGTH

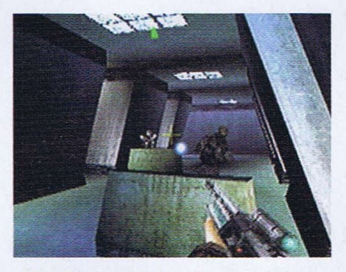
We should be mentioning the fact that this purports to be a Bond game but really isn't, and we were going to – until we discovered how incredibly short the single player mode is. Alarm bells went off when, at the end of mission two, the game said 43% complete – and sure enough, it was right.

new touch-screen based control system (which can also be seen being used to great effect in *Metroid Prime: Echoes*) and a lower screen inventory that works very well. First, though, we'll go back…

> **"ROGUE AGENT SEEMS TO BROADLY WORK AS A FIRST PERSON SHOOTER ON THE DS"**

The major problem with *Rogue Agent* on Gamecube was that it was utterly unremarkable. It excelled in nothing. Levels were linear and tedious, enemies ran straight for you, even if you were dishing out waves of lead, and, as mentioned previously, the GoldenEye (a device that, variously, allowed you to see through walls and become temporarily invincible) was rendered worthless by the fact that the guns were so powerful – you didn't need to rely on super-powers to dispatch the armies of largely moronic cannon fodder.

On the DS, *Rogue Agent*'s problems seem less pronounced. It still has its fair share of niggles – everything from aiming to AI has something wrong with it – but if ever EA's simplistic, predictable FPS template had a natural home it's the handheld. Technically, this is very impressive indeed, boasting stripped down but not noticeably different takes on the Gamecube's levels, plus a reduced number of on-screen enemies, which arguably works better. In fact, enemy AI has been handled in such a way that it appears that, rather than having less foes to cope with,



Δ **The Commando is a nice weapon: fast-firing and with a sniper scope too.**

VIRTUAL REALITY

Virtual Training and Multiplayer modes make things interesting…



Virtual Training is exclusive to the DS version and does exactly what it says on the tin: training. However, by snuffing out each mission's VR enemies, you can upgrade things like weaponry for the main game.



There are seven initial multiplayer levels, six of them locked from the outset. They include handheld versions of Funhouse (pictured) and Golden Gate, which were very decent maps in the Gamecube version.



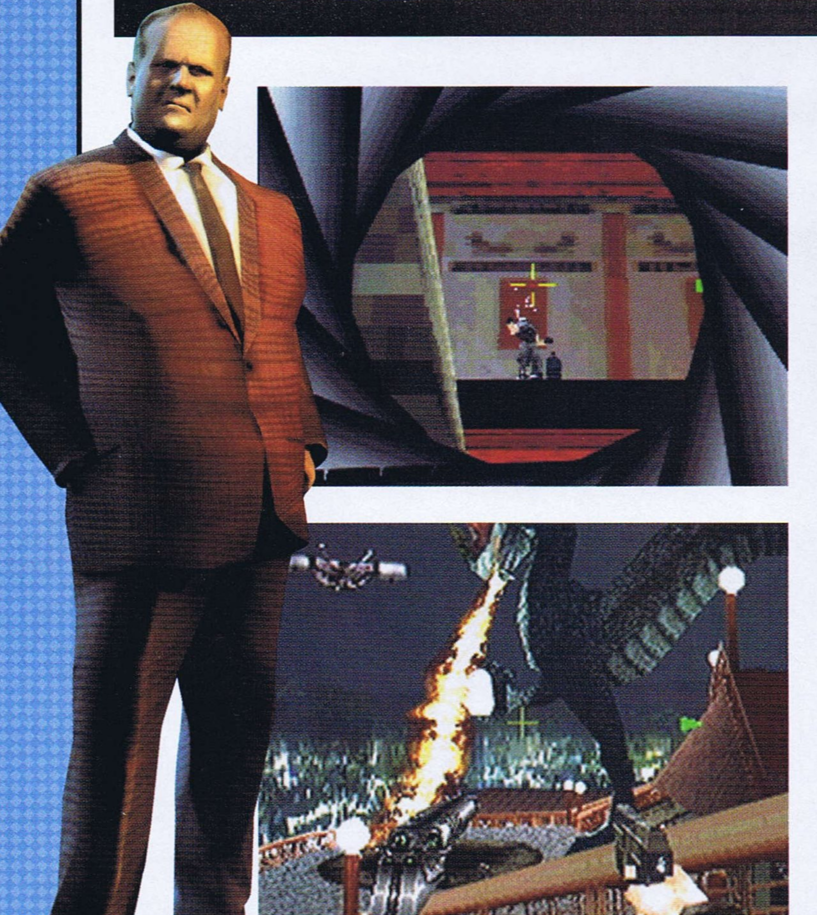
There are also 'hidden' multiplayer maps – Bore Tunnel, Bathhouse and Mining Pit – which open up once you have achieved some tough objectives in the single-player, like finishing Hong Kong on Hard mode.



Tied into completion of the Virtual Training mode are unlockable skins and weapons too, including the elusive golden gun (which, bizarrely, is more easily attainable than some of the maps themselves).



Multiplayer works off single card and multi-card, and the maps have translated surprisingly well to the small screen, feeling tighter and more exciting. Graphical curtailing has hardly affected them either.





△ Handy icons in the top right tell you if you've successfully dispatched an enemy that is out of sight or far-off. Here, we've taken down one of Dr No's helicopters.





you have more. Okay, so they come in a neat and tidy line, one after the other, but on a smaller screen this approach works well, and is even (whisper it) *quite exciting* – something that you couldn't say about the Cube version.

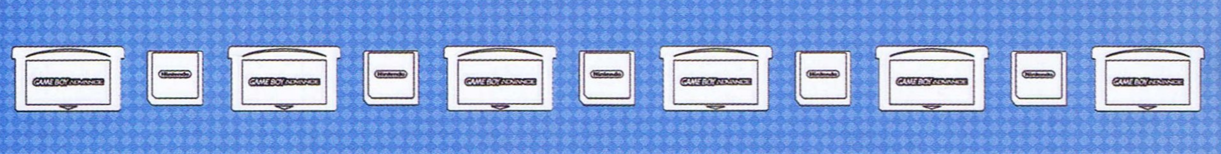
The dual wielding has been retained too, and the guns, which were one of the highlights of the original version, feel better and tighter on a smaller screen. There's a good variety, and EA don't mind dishing them out early, either. You gain access to the mag rail, which allows you to shoot through walls on the very first level, while rocket launchers turn up on level three. In between, you'll have sawn-off shotguns, two types of pistols, longbows, grenades (against all odds, one of the most useful weapons in the game), assault rifles and poison darts. The enemies have set death-routines for each weapon, but even so, the guns are one of the strongest parts of the title.

> **"SOMETIMES YOU CAN BE WITHIN PUNCHING DISTANCE AND THEY STILL WON'T SNUFF IT"**

The mag rail also brings the GoldenEye into use. There's a button in the top left of your lower screen inventory; touch it, and you can suddenly see through walls. Line up some poor schmo on the other side and – blammo! – he's mag railed, taking him out of the equation.

Admittedly, you can still go through the entire game without even coming close to operating the golden orb, but because enemies come one after the other, there seems to be more point to it. Before, there were so many foes coming at you, you just had to spray bullets around – here, you've got a little more time, which in turn gives you more of an opportunity to make use of the game's key feature.

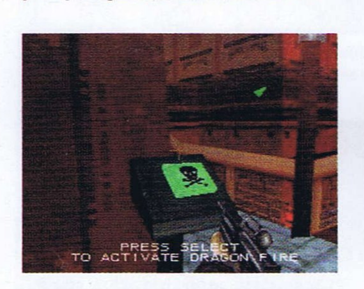
Despite that, *Rogue Agent* is still a long way from being perfect. There's a gaping chasm of inconsistency in terms of AI. Grunts do one of two things: cleverly head for cover when shooting or being shot at, or stand in a wide open space, firing wildly towards you, while you walk right up

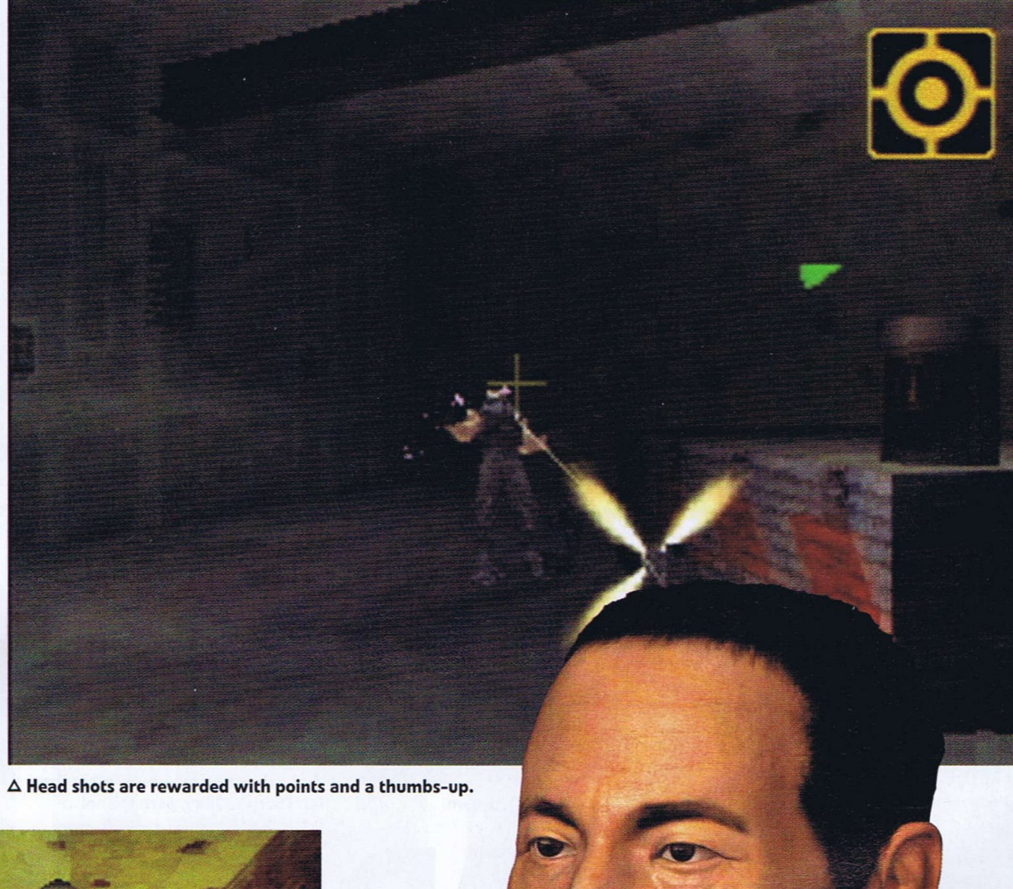






△ **This level, set in Hong Kong, can get pretty tough after this. Nice suit too.**





△ **Head shots are rewarded with points and a thumbs-up.**



△ **The animation on the enemy characters is largely very good, though the way in which some of them die – like here – belongs in the circus.**

to them and shoot them in the head. There's some lagging, too – you sometimes have to wait two or three seconds for an enemy to die after smashing a couple of shells from a sawn-off right in their lughole, which can lead to them getting that extra, crucial shot in.

But that's not even the most frustrating bit. That honour goes to the countless times you plug someone in the head or body or legs or *anywhere* and they don't die. Sometimes you can be within punching distance and they *still* won't snuff it. If you're quick to the boil, be prepared for some coronary-inducing moments, especially when combined with the less-than-generous spacing of the checkpoints.

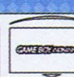
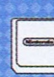
Still, for a game with all these problems, it somehow works. It's simplistic but fast-paced, predictable but enjoyable, and technically it's fantastic. There will be better DS shooters – but for the time being you could do a lot worse.

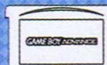
TIM WEAVER

DUAL ★★★
TOUCH ★★★
3











△ Marty's not exactly camouflaged, but it's okay as he can stealth crawl.



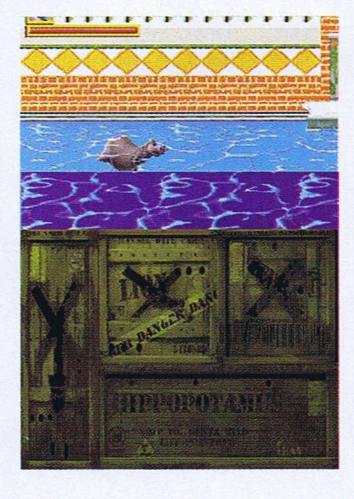
△ We've spotted water ahead. Better swap to the hippo or you'll drown.



△ Look at him go – he's faster than Ian Thorpe. Okay, perhaps not…



△ Melman's so tall he takes up half the screen. Hope no one tries a low attack.



MADAGASCAR



FROM: ACTIVISION
MICROPHONE: NO
PLAYERS: 2
OUT: NOW
SINGLE CART LINK: YES
COST: £30 (DS) £25 (GBA)



Ever seen a Zebra 'do' stealth? Believe me, you don't want to.

Don't get us wrong, clearly a game starring a talking zebra isn't going to be realistic, but *Madagascar* doesn't make sense. Take Alex for example. He's a lion, the king of the jungle, one of the strongest beasts on the planet, and yet when he treads on a little creature, he howls in agony. He's a lion!

Then you've got the security guards who can't see a massive zebra a few paces behind them. It's only when you walk in front of them, wave and say 'hello. It's me' that you'll be spotted, but then if you stand in a crate right in front of their faces they will make a bemused 'where d'e go' expression. Idiots.

To moan about all the nonsensical moments would be petty, but *Madagascar* is so irritating that it's hard not to pick on every tiny point. Apart from a few DS exclusive mini-games and a two-player wireless option, it's pretty similar on both machines and it all looks fairly solid as you switch between characters and leap over platforms, collecting coins. But as soon as the animals have to face an enemy, it all goes apples.

The four main characters have different skills, so you're supposed to swap between them, but all their attacks are so crap it doesn't really matter. To kill a pigeon, the lion has to roar (obviously), but the gap between pressing the button and the roar is big enough for the pigeon to hit you in the face, which of course would critically injure a lion. The same goes for the hippo and the zebra. Funniest of all is the giraffe, who is so tall his headbutt usually misses. Jesus…

And you just wait for the stealth missions. To say the soldiers are pea-brained is being generous; redcurrant-brained would be far better. But despite this, you'll still get caught as you can't see ahead of you. So you'll be hiding in a crate, you'll make your move, but five seconds later a giant guard will march into view. It is equally frustrating on the platform levels as you can't see below you, so for all you know there could be a lake down there and unless you switch to the hippo every time you drop, you could drown.

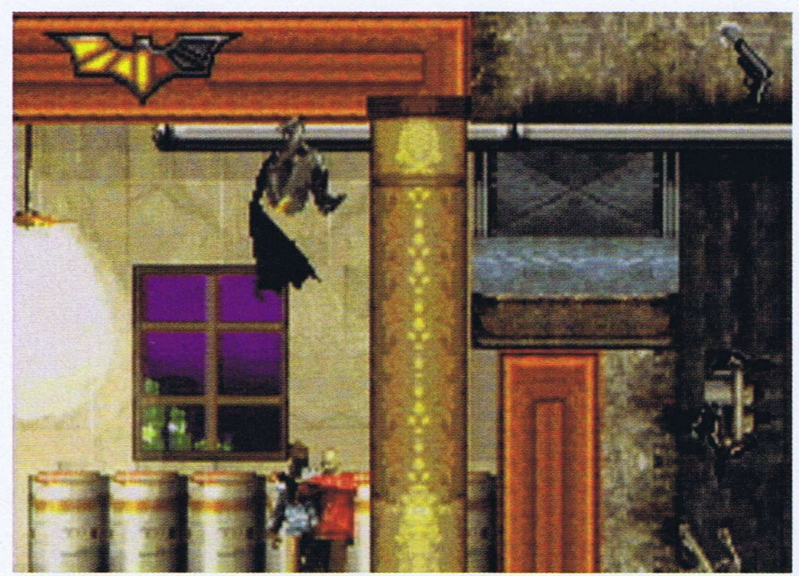
We're mild-mannered people and as such, don't wish for any cruelty to animals, but after playing this we wanted to punch the zebra, lion, hippo and giraffe in the face. It shouldn't hurt, but then if a pigeon can kill a lion…

> **"AFTER PLAYING THIS I WANTED TO PUNCH ZEBRAS, LIONS AND GIRAFFES IN THE FACE"**

TOM EAST



△ There are some DS-exclusive minigames. Try some penguin fishing.



△ Each of these bad guys can be taken out easily. If they don't block, just keep hitting them. If they do block, just kick them in the ankles until they die. The fighting's not great…



△ Batman does have a reversal attack, which, although nice in theory, doesn't work particularly well in practice.



△ You could plummet to your death here, and you'd have to go back to the beginning.



△ Each of the game's 12 levels is based on a scene and locale from the film.



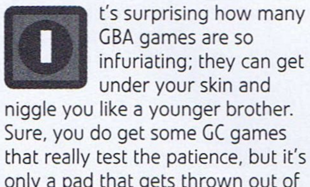
△ Batman skulks in the shadows.

BATMAN BEGINS



FROM: EA **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **SAVE:** ON CART **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £30

Batman Begins to get very annoying indeed.



It's surprising how many GBA games are so infuriating; they can get under your skin and niggle you like a younger brother. Sure, you do get some GC games that really test the patience, but it's only a pad that gets thrown out of the pram.

With the GBA however, the whole kit is immensely throwable. You could easily skim it across a stretch of water – it would definitely be a five or sixer. And the way *Batman Begins* plays, you'll soon be flinging your GBA like a Bat-a-rang.

At first glance though, it doesn't look so bad. EA haven't skimped on presentation and the cutscenes pop up, graphic novel-style, with all the relevant stars' faces gurning through the gloom. Also the music is suitably pompous, it's quite pleasing to look at and the animation is great as Batman unfurls his cape and glides like only a trust-fund psycho dressed as a bat can.

The gameplay follows the same structure as the Gamecube version, and sees Bruce Wayne travel from the mountain ninja school to Gotham City. It combines combat, platforming and a touch of stealth, but as on Cube, it's all a bit shallow. The developers obviously thought they'd done the hard part when they rendered Michael Caine's face and, as a result, left the game a hollow husk of an experience.

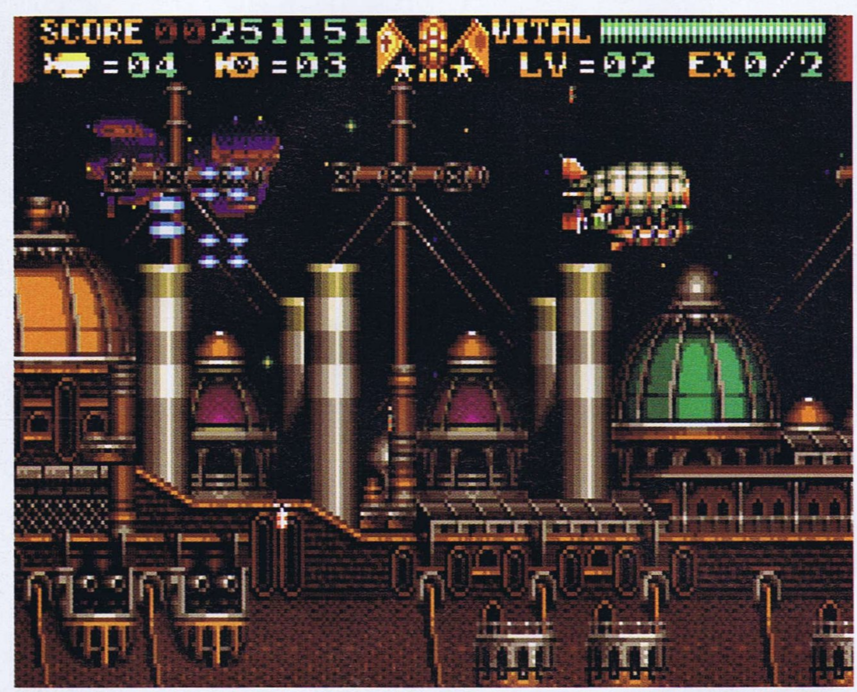
Not only is it very basic, but it's petty and niggly too. The enemies are merely a hindrance – they're just about smart enough to defend their faces, so much so that they can only be defeated by repeated kicks to the ankles. All that time training with Liam Neeson wasn't wasted, then.

But the most annoying thing is the way the game has been stretched out by refusing to include any gamer-friendly checkpoints. Whenever your health bar empties it's back to the beginning of the level, so you have to repeat every single fiddly bit yet again.

Soon the jumping and swinging you once thought was cute becomes as pleasurable as a broken glass ice cream. Your wrists start to twitch and you start to visualise yourself hurling your GBA against a wall/into a pond/at a small child. And we expect that Batman wouldn't approve of behaviour like that.

DAVE HARRISON

2



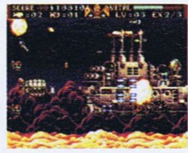
△ The GBA's face buttons are used to fire both backwards and forwards at will – a very useful tool.



△ The bosses are well designed – shame they're repeated.



△ There are two ships, one for ground targets…

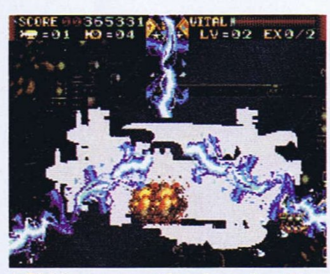


△ … and the other is best for airborne targets.



△ Some levels send you hurtling from right to left…



△ All enemy sprites are nice and chunky, although some look lame.



△ Picking up smart bombs makes the final boss encounters much easier.

STEEL EMPIRE

FROM: ZOO DIGITAL **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **SAVE:** ON CART **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £25

Ancient Mega Drive shooter gets revamped.

We remember playing *Steel Empire* on the Mega Drive and, truth be told, we didn't actually like it very much – probably because the Mega Drive was already saturated with excellent shooters like *Hellfire* and the Thunderforce series. In comparison to these, *Steel Empire* felt a bit lame, so it's surprising to find that we really enjoyed it second time around. Granted, it's still not the best shooter ever made, but given that we've not had a decent shooter on GBA since *Gradius*, this seems to be just what the doctor ordered.

The theme of *Steel Empire* is that of old-worldly steam punk. Giant mechanised airships bombard you with huge missiles, and gunboats, submarines and trains pump projectiles at you. The chunkiness of it all is quite charming, and visually it's clean enough to make negotiating the levels and projectiles a test of your skill rather than patience. Pleasingly, it has also been spruced up since the Mega Drive version, with more detail and richer colours, and on the GBA's small screen it looks great.

> **"NOT PERFECT, BUT WE WOULDN'T RECOMMEND TURNING YOUR NOSE UP AT IT"**

Unfortunately, many of *Steel Empire*'s original flaws haven't been ironed out. To begin with, unless you stick it on Hard from the beginning, you'll find yourself breezing through it inside a week – which may, or may not be a problem for you depending on how hardcore you consider yourself. However, something that isn't quite as forgivable is the game's insistence on repeating enemies, and in some cases, bosses. For example, one end of level boss is repeated on a later level not once but *twice*, with the only difference being the swapped colour patterns. It's a shame, because each new environment is always different and always a treat for the eyes, and the fact that the enemies become over-familiar feels just a little cheap.

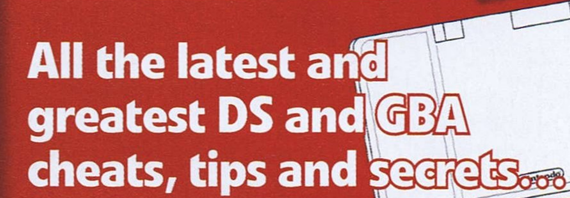
That said, this is still a solid shooter, and a solid shooter on a format that isn't blessed with a great deal of choice. It's not perfect, but we wouldn't recommend turning your nose up at it either…

GERAINT EVANS

3



All the latest and greatest DS and GBA cheats, tips and secrets...



TIP OF THE MONTH

SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY

Let's face it, the all-black look went out ten years ago. So here's how to find some more cheery costumes for Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory

UNLOCK INVINCIBILITY, INFINITE AMMO, INFINITE GADGETS
Complete the game.

BONUS OUTFITS

BONUS OUTFIT 1: CAMOUFLAGE
In Mission 1, when you see Lacerda making the transfer, turn right into the shadows to find the outfit.

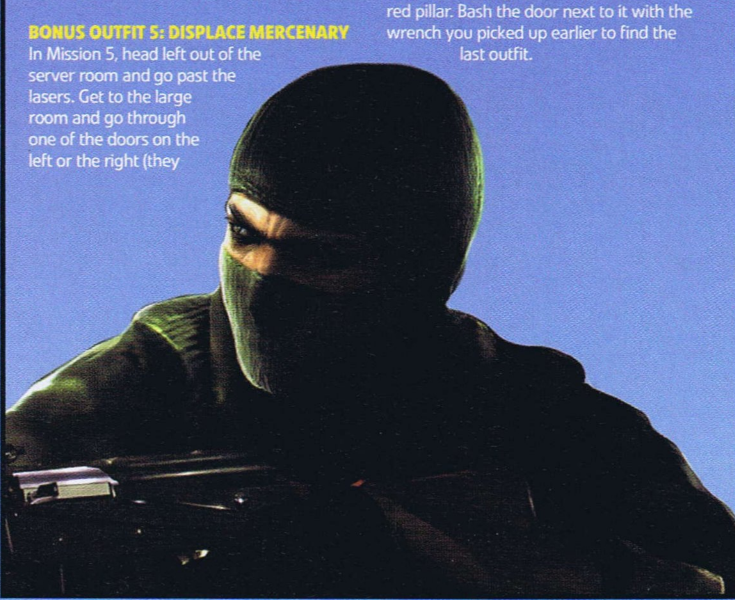
BONUS OUTFIT 2: SHORT SLEEVES
This outfit can be found in the vault in Mission 2, in the box next to the computer.

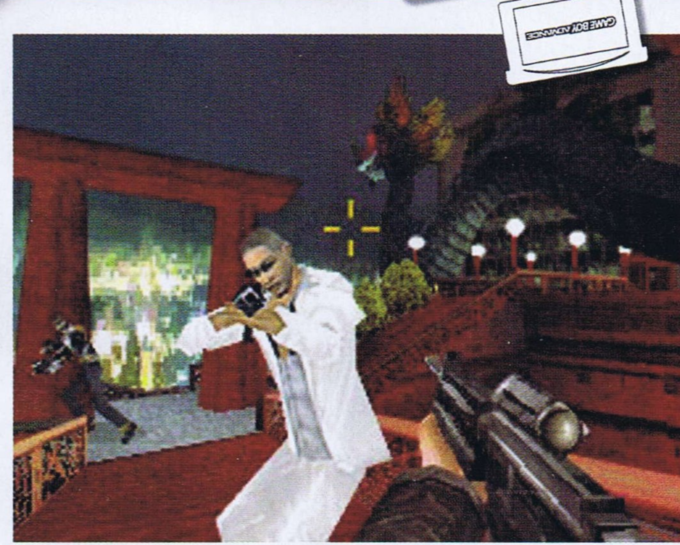
BONUS OUTFIT 3: NATIONAL GUARD
After the last cutscene of Mission 3, kill the two bad guys and climb the pipe up to a ledge to find the outfit.

BONUS OUFIT 4: MASKED SAM
This outfit is found on the floor of the panic room (which has the code 5698).

BONUS OUTFIT 5: DISPLACE MERCENARY
In Mission 5, head left out of the server room and go past the lasers. Get to the large room and go through one of the doors on the left or the right (they both lead to the same place). Next, go through the right door (with the code 5800) and you will find the outfit.

BONUS OUTFIT 6: THERMAL SUIT
In Mission 6, just after the third save point, you will have to crawl through an air vent. When you emerge from it, you will find a red pillar. Bash the door next to it with the wrench you picked up earlier to find the last outfit.





△ There are quite a few unlockables for you to find in *Rogue Agent* on the DS. Enough to keep you occupied once you've finished the rather brief game.

GOLDENEYE ROGUE AGENT

Unlock Atlantis Stage
Complete Virtual Mission Two.

Unlock Golden Gate Stage
Complete Virtual Training Four.

Unlock Hack Ability
Complete Mission One.

Unlock Moonraker Stage
Complete Virtual Training Three.

Unlock Polarity Shield
Complete Virtual Training Three.

Unlock Virtual Mission Two
Complete Virtual Mission One.

Unlock Uplink Stage
Complete Virtual Training 5.

Unlock Virtual Training 4
Complete Virtual Training Three.

Unlock Virtual Training 6
Complete Virtual Training 5.

Unlock You Only Live Once Mode
Finish Campaign mode on Hard.

ANOTHER CODE

Unlock Starred Game
Finish the game once.

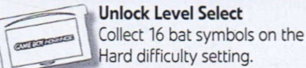
BATMAN BEGINS

Unlock Level Select
Collect 16 bat symbols on the Hard difficulty setting.

Unlock Hard Mode
Complete the game once using one save.

RIDGE RACER

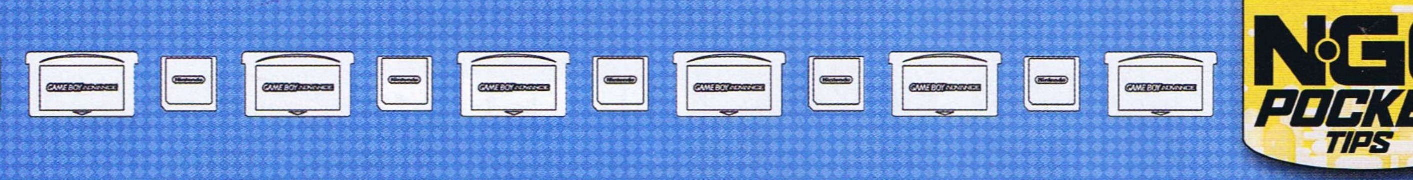
Reverse track
Accelerate until you're in fifth gear, then make a U turn and drive towards the wall. When you hit sixth gear, the wall will disappear. The track will now be in reverse and you will be in the lead.







△ For a full review of *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent*, turn to page 58.

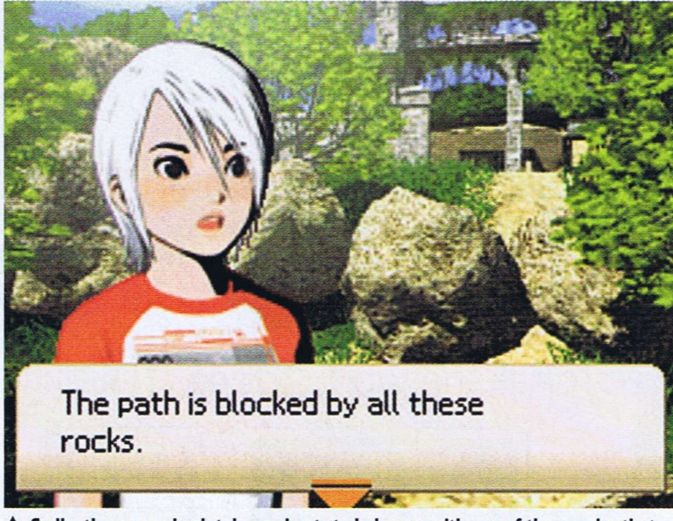


SEND US YOUR SECRETS

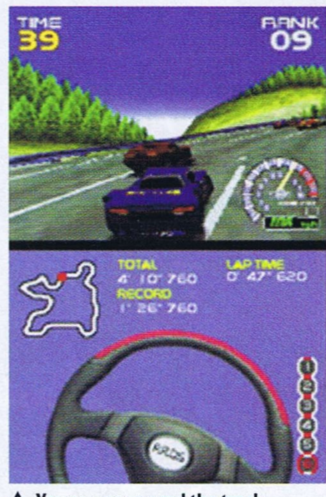
Have you discovered a previously unknown secret in *GoldenEye*? Found a great tip for *Another Code*? Or have you found any cool secrets or smart tricks in any of your DS or GBA games? We want to hear from you. Send us your secrets and we'll print the top ten every month, and the best entry will win a game. But, be warned: if we catch you cut and pasting cheat codes from the internet, we'll get rather cross. Post your entries to Pocket Tips, **NGC**, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, bath, BA1 2BW. Or Email your entries to ngc@futurenet.co.uk (title the email Pocket Tips).



△ There are loads of things to see in the sublime *Another Code*.



△ Sadly, there are absolutely no cheats to help you with any of the puzzles that litter *Another Code*. You'll just have to do it yourself.



△ You can go around the track backwards in *Ridge Racer DS*.

Quick Start
Instead of just pushing accelerate when the lights go, keep the needle of your tachometer just under the red. When you start you will speed off, rather than spinning your wheels. If you go into the red, though, you do a burn out and waste time.

Hidden Sounds
If you listen closely, you will be able to hear Nintendo characters cheering you on.

Unlock Galaga Pac Jam Song
Race more than ten multiplayer races.

Unlock Mushroom Kingdom II Song
Beat DK Team Racing in Car Attack mode.

SPIDER-MAN 2

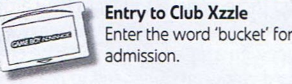


Unlock all Specials
Insert a Spider-Man: Mysterio's Revenge GBA cart.

Fast Charge Meter
Complete the game on any difficulty.

Unlimited Charge Meter
Complete the game on any difficulty, with a total score of 100%.

THE URBZ SIMS IN THE CITY



Entry to Club Xzzle
Enter the word 'bucket' for admission.

Cheat Ninjas
These are the locations of the cheat ninjas, from whom you can buy cheats.

Cheat Ninja 1
Go to November 20th, 1984 in the time machine between the hours of 1am and 2am.

Cheat Ninja 2
Go to the carnival between the hours of 2am and 3am.

Cheat Ninja 3
Go to Paradise Island between the hours of 4am and 5am.

Cheat Ninja 4
Go to the secret passage leading from the jail to the dark tree between the hours of 6am and 7am.

Cheat Ninja 5
Go to Moon Base Zeta between the hours of 10am and 11am.

Unlock Moon Base Zeta
Complete the game, then buy a piece of moon rock off the internet. Go to the phone booth in the Sim quarter and you'll hear the message 'phone home.' it will take you to Moon Base Zeta.

Free Repairs
Call the repair man to fix some items. When he's fixing the last one, leave the house. When you enter, the items will be repaired.

PING-PALS



Ultra Rare Words
Type in these words for some free coins.

Amplitude, antiquing, baklava, bombardment, bombastic, cabbage, cantankerous, comatose, doddering, dressage, emu, epoch, equinox, fiddlesticks, fisticuffs, fortuitous, genie, goldilocks, gorgon, infidel, isthmus, jab, larval, magenta, oxymoron, planetarium, scalawag, skullduggery, stenographer, stingray, undulate, vegan, wisenheimer.



△ *Ridge Racer* is a flawed game, but there should be plenty of replay factor with the cheats printed above. All the courses backwards? That's double the game.



△ If you listen carefully, we've installed a minuscule microchip that plays the samples of the Nintendo characters. Hang on, that might have been a lie.



PICTO ANIMATIONS

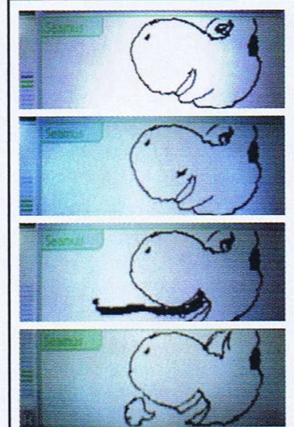
Your creations printed for all the world to see.

Ah, *Pictochat*! Such an innocent little application – so open to ritual abuse! You can't beat being sent a picture of your disembodied head with the message 'get on with some frickin' work or you're going to find yourself out of a job.' Honestly, it brings a tear to our collective eyes. Almost as much as when we see these little beauties – examples of people being more productive and showing more talent with *Pictochat* than we could ever hope for…

MORE MANGA

Some more nicely drawn stills from Tom Atwood, aka RokStar. Unfortunately, you never told us which series the characters are from. Even so, if you could send us more, that'd be nice.



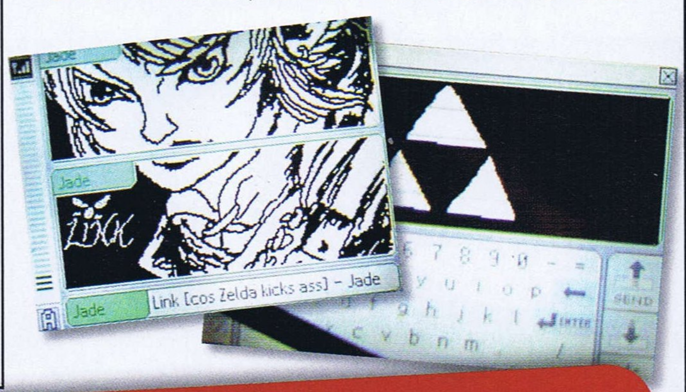


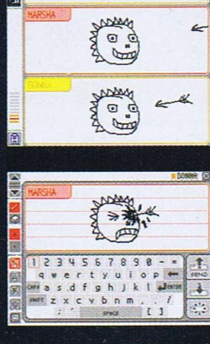
IT'S YOSHI

Although quite what he's doing is anyone's guess. Seamus Conacher sent us this little animation via email. We can see it's Yoshi and we can see his tongue, but quite what the black spot in the second frame, and white blob on the fourth are meant to be is a mystery. Is he licking a fly off his face? Is he about to gnaw his own hands off? If so, why didn't we see the spectacular bloody finale? And what happened to the pupil in his left eye? Something tells us we're never going to find out…

RINKY DINK

The old Link! This is a cracking three-panel effort from new artist, Jade Everett, via email. We love this kind of stuff – particularly because it shows the kind of results you can get with a steady hand and a bit of patience. It's such a shame that any hard work can't be saved to memory. Ah well.





HOW TO DO IT...

1. *Draw a little picture of something and then click on Send.*

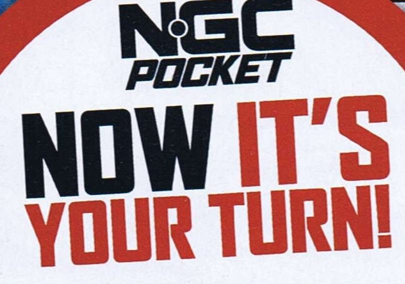
2. *Now copy that picture back into your drawing board and make a little change to it before sending it again.*

3. *Now copy that picture onto your drawing board again, and edit it for the third frame in the animation. Keep sending and copying your picture back and forth, making all your little changes along the way.*

4. *The amount of space you have left in the message log is shown by the meter to the left-hand side. Keep an eye on it.*

5. *Once you've finished the final frame of your animation, press the up arrow to flick back through the message log until you reach the top.*

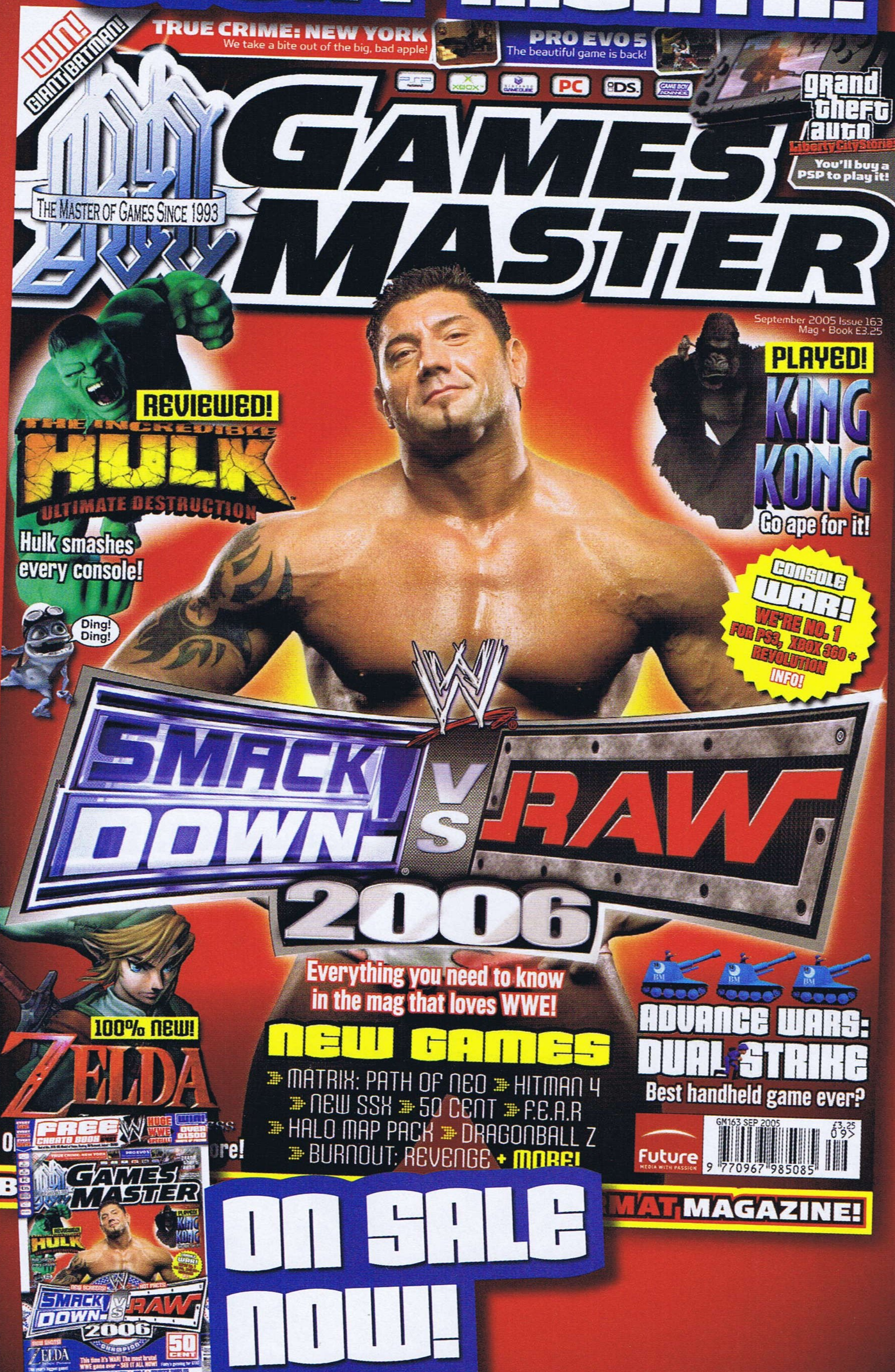
6. *Now hold down the left shoulder button and then half a second later, hold down the right shoulder button.*



We want your Pictochat artwork

Have you done something amazingly creative with your DS and *Pictochat*? If you've made pictures, animations or anything else you'd like to share with the world, we'd love to see it. As you can't save your pictures on the DS, this is what we'd like you to do. When you've finished with your Pictoart, turn the lights off, take a photo with a digital camera and send it as an email (titled Pictoart) to **ngc@futurenet.co.uk**. If you haven't got access to a digital camera, just send a normal photograph to: Pictoart, **NGC** Magazine 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.

EVERY GAME!
EVERY FORMAT!
EVERY MONTH!



OUR PROMISE

Our reviewers are the most talented and knowledgeable Nintendo fans in the business. We don't only play games at work – we play them at home too, just like you. We ensure that we've played games through to the end so that we can give you a proper verdict – and one that saves you from wasting money.

NGC THE VERDICT YOU DESERVE! REVIEWS

HULK: ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION

Live one of Kittsy's dreams by smearing yourself in green paint and rampaging though a city – smashing members of the general public and the police with bits of tree and lamppost. **P72**



DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION MARIO MIX

Now you too can make like Lou Albano and 'do the mario.' You'll find our review over on… **P82**

PLUS!

MADAGASCAR

Talking animals – no matter how 'cute' or 'funny' - are still the work of satan, and they must be punished… **P78**

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

A platformer about a lonely man who invites young kids into his death-trap riddled home. Strangely sinister. **P79**

FANTASTIC 4

Get some mates round and defeat evil with the repeated use of the A button. Does that sound fantastic to you? **P80**

CHIBI ROBO

Housekeeping with robots. It does sounds rubbish, but it's one of the best games we've played this year. **P88**

OUR SCORING SYSTEM

0-24
Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured this game is absolute crud.

25-49
A disappointing title, stashed with nasty faults and likely to be short on any quality.

50-74
Some great bits, some not-so great bits. Decent but definitely problems.

75-89
Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.

90+
Rarely awarded, a 90+ is essential. Buy with confidence.

NGC STAR GAME

MEET THE NGC TEAM

If we could have our own Chibi Robo, what would we make him do?



TOM E
Easty's annual trip to the vet would be a thing of the past. "I'd fit Chibi with a shearing attachment, then lie back and enjoy."



MARTIN
"What with blood streaked floors and fatty deposits in the plug hole, a personal Chibi would be a godsend before forensics turn up."



PAUL
"Clean my car, make my sandwiches, wash my hair, wipe my bum… Okay, maybe I'll let him off cleaning the car."



GERAINT
Our resident Welshy would feed leeks into Chibi's rotor blades for instant chopping. "You know it makes sense, boyo."



T SIMPSON
Tom's tiny bicycle would be perfect for Chibi to ride around a full-size house. "If he stayed indoors, nobody would ridicule him."



GREENER
Mark Green wants Chibi to clean his Eastern European Boy Band hair. "I think Solid Snake might be hiding in it," he moaned.

"An army of imbeciles"

THE INCREDIBLE HULK ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION™

The mean, green, killing machine goes and does a Spider-Man…

△ The climbing ability is useful if you miss a jump and need to grab a nearby building.

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	RADICAL
PUBLISHER	VIVENDI
RELEASE DATE	26TH AUG
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	7
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£35



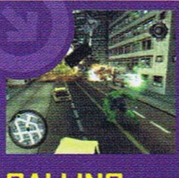
First impressions, then – five minutes in and we have to admit that we're not actually impressed. It's almost as though we've been transported back in time to the Gamecube's earliest third-party titles, as if the last four years hadn't even happened. It looks bland, it looks dirty, it all seems a bit basic. As though the level furniture – buildings, rocks and so forth – are all just place holders – stuff just bunged in there until the more accomplished models have been finished, just waiting in the wings to replace the uglier, second rate ones that are currently being used.

The enemy infantry animation is laughable too, with tiny little men that skate over the level's surface, bumbling into walls, their arms flailing like an army of imbeciles. It looks silly, and certainly isn't up to the level of quality we've grown accustomed to over the past year. But then again, this *is* the training level we're talking about – surely things have to get better?

Thankfully, it does get much better. Radical Entertainment have obviously tried to focus on what makes Hulk who he is – they have tried to capture the essence of what makes him a likeable character in the first place, and attempted to make the player feel as though they have him under their command. Naturally then, the emphasis is on destruction. Plenty of it. And in this respect they've done a fine job.

In the game's large, free-roaming city – Hulk can pretty much do as he pleases, and it's clear that Radical have taken the hugely successful *Spider-Man 2* as a rough template.

Obviously, Hulk doesn't have the ability to swing, but that's not to say that movement through the



CALLING ALL CARS

A little thing maybe, but it certainly made us smile – you can hear the radio chatter from cops, tanks, helicopters and incidental samples from civilians and infantry cowering in fear. There's nothing quite like hearing an APB for a 'twelve foot, green man' as you scale the walls of a large downtown office block…

> "IT'S CLEAR THAT THE DEVELOPERS HAVE TAKEN SPIDER-MAN 2 AS A TEMPLATE"

Control the raging spirit that dwells within him



This is a Hulk-Buster, a mech designed to take down our green friend. Don't fancy its chances though...



Purchasing moves slowly turns the Hulk into an extremely powerful tool for destruction.

Charge up a jump to send the Hulk hurtling through the air. He's surprisingly agile, you know.

GET AROUND...

You access the levels via a hub – Banner's hideaway in a secluded church. From there you can use jump points to get to different areas. Thankfully, each zone also has its own series of jump points, negating the need to trudge over the game's vast environments.

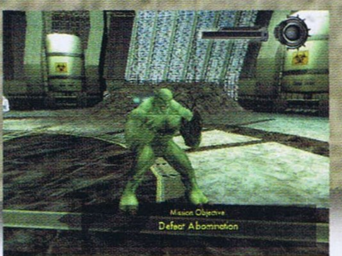







Hulk hitches a ride on a giant balloon.


Multiple 'copters can be deadly.



The Hulk-hating Blonsky gets his...



... own taste of gamma radiation.

streets isn't as exhilarating. Hulk is actually pretty agile as he can run at a decent pace, and a charged jump sends him flying high into the air – an ability which closely echoes the athleticism displayed in Ang Lee's film.

Hulk also has the ability to scale walls, or better, run up them. After a few minute's practice, you'll find yourself leaping from roof to roof, smashing through roadside objects and launching yourself up tower blocks with remarkable ease. Just like *Spider-Man 2*, it feels liberating and, most importantly, it's a great deal of fun.

You could argue that, in some ways, running up the face of a building doesn't sound particularly Hulk-like, but, in fairness to Radical Entertainment, they've done a fine job of getting the feel of the green giant just right. There's a definite sense of weight behind him – run at full pelt, and Hulk's turning circle will increase. Additionally every landing from a great height will shatter the concrete beneath his feet, and every meaty claw at a building's exterior will send rubble falling down to the streets below.

It's this feeling of weight and destruction that proves to be the winning combination. Pretty much any object can be picked up and smashed, but the best moment occurs when you grab cars on the run before pummelling the police with them. It really is immensely satisfying.

What's even better is the level of versatility to Hulk's actions. You can pick





GRAND THEFT HULK

Taking an obvious cue from GTA, if you smash up too much stuff, the choppers will come after you – at which point, if you're quick enough, you can take them out to reap a huge Smash Point reward. If you can't be bothered to do any of the other challenges, then this is a great way to boost your move list...



The more chaos you cause, the higher the Threat Increase – which sends more police and special forces after you.

△ Throwing cars at airborne enemies is very satisfying.

HULK ANGRY

Taking hits and damage is all well and good, but all too frequently you're 'treated' to a volley of rocket fire which, if you're unlucky enough not to avoid or parry the first hit, keeps pummelling the Hulk over and over, and there's nothing you can do about it other than sit back and watch. It's so frustrating it's unbelievable.

△ The Hulk can wield trees and lampposts like clubs.

up cars and split them in two to use as whacking great metallic fists, lampposts can be wielded to swat away bothersome infantry, and rocks can be used as impromptu shields to deflect incoming rockets.

As Hulk progresses, you can unlock a huge wealth of moves – very much like in *Spider-Man 2*. However, whereas the vast majority of Spidey's moves proved inconsequential to your progress, in *Ultimate Destruction* they give the player genuine options, not just for attack, but for defence, too. In fact, the unlockable moves become vital to your progress, with tougher difficulty levels demanding a thorough knowledge of which techniques to use, when, and why.

> "COMBAT FEELS LESS REPETITIVE THAN IN SPIDER-MAN 2"

BANNER BANNED

Thankfully, Radical have decided against incorporating Banner into the game; a relief for anyone who had to endure those awful 'stealth' missions from the previous game. Pleasingly, Banner takes a back seat this time – he only appears in cutscenes and voicing the secret files you access between levels.

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

Control the raging spirit that dwells within him



△ Working as a pair, these guys are pretty tough.



△ Even holding a giant boulder, The Hulk can still shift.



△ While the environments are very large, there's a certain blandness and lack of charm to them.

HULK SMASH



RUN!

Hulk can leg it up the sides of buildings without even breaking a sweat. If it wasn't for this ability, traversing the city would not only be a much more long-winded process, but would also be more treacherous, as this manoeuvre is your best means of escape.



GRAB!

There are loads of different permutations to this ability. As you progress though, Hulk can use items as shields, toss back enemy missiles, rip up cars to make a pair of steel fists, or simply pound them into someone's face like a makeshift hammer.



TOSS!

Once you're able to grab things on the run, the simple throw takes on a whole new lease of life. Throwing a car into a blockade of cops is great, but picking up a trashed tank and throwing it for miles over a desert valley (straight into an incoming chopper) is priceless.



JUMP

If you charge up a jump, run up the side of a building and launch yourself off the top, you can get insane amounts of air for that good old stomach-in-mouth feeling. Better yet is the ability to top jump upon landing to send Hulk bouncing through the city.



RAGE

Power up Hulk's adrenaline and you'll get a secondary meter that can be used for some devastating attacks. His Critical Atomic Smash, for example, is a charged attack that sends out shockwaves, obliterating anything foolish enough to be too close to him.

As a result, combat feels more involving and far less repetitive than in *Spider-Man 2*.

With such a huge moves list and the number of destructive options at your disposal, you would think that Hulk would be somewhat fiddly and unwieldy to control, but in actual fact, much like general movement, it's all pretty accessible. The lock-on feature (which allows you to cycle through different targets) is well implemented and allows you to mix up your attacks, so you can easily pound tanks, pick up cars, and throw objects at far away helicopters. It is all remarkably intuitive.

Furthermore, any new attacks you buy mid-game can also be tested out in a safe area as soon as you've purchased them, which makes committing the various button combinations to memory a much less laborious task than in similar third-person action games.

But, of course, wanton destruction, no matter how satisfying, can still only take a game so far, and *Hulk* does make some effort to inject some variety into the proceedings. The game's structure is actually very similar to *Spider-Man 2*, in that you roam the environment looking for special icons that trigger events and levels.

These come in two main forms. The first form is the Story mode missions, tasks that need to be completed in order to both further the plot and complete the game. These can only be accessed if you have collected enough of Hulk's abilities –



AGAIN, AGAIN!

If you have the patience to seek them out, Hulk's individual challenges highlight the versatility of his move-set, from simple race and fetch and carry quests, to a 'punt a car through a glowing ring' challenge. There are also Bronze, Silver and Gold awards, as well as high scores, which all add replay value.



△ One of the more useful special moves. By ripping cars in two, Hulk can use them as huge metallic boxing gloves.



"Accumulated through destruction"

STATS

For a house-sized green giant, Hulk is pretty fragile. Watch in disgust as his health bar diminishes at the speed of light, and weep when you see there's a barrage of rocket and tank fire between you and the energy pick-up.

HULK

The 'man' himself. Controlling him in the free-roaming city is far and away the best bit of the game, and the sheer exhilaration of bounding from building to building is almost worth the price of entry alone. So far, Ultimate Destruction *is the best videogame representation of the hero to date.*

MAP

Where would you be without this? Lost, that's where. Lost in the city's identikit buildings, without a clue as to what to do and where to go. This gives you the heads-up on objectives, enemies and the jump points that act as the game's teleporters.

THE CITY

Ah yes, Hulk's very own playground of destruction. Sure, it may be populated by innocent civilians who've never done anything to personally offend Banner, but that won't stop you from interrupting their daily lives by wanging them in into the whirring blades of an attacking chopper…

fighting moves that can be bought from the game's hub by spending Smash Points, which are accumulated through destruction. To supplement these Smash Points, you'll find other icons that give you little incidental challenges. These, like in *Spider-Man 2*, consist of simple marker-to-marker trials or more heroic deeds like rescuing civilians from a burning building before delivering them safely to an ambulance.

These challenges work well, and are in no way as intrusive as *Spider-Man 2*'s efforts. There's none of that 'help, I'm dangling off the edge of a building' rubbish every five minutes, and you can pick and choose when, and if you want to try each challenge. Even if you want to ignore the challenges, you can still rack up Smash Points by finding hidden icons, or by just roaming around, smashing the

"THE JOURNEY THROUGH STORY MODE IS SATISFYINGLY DESTRUCTIVE WHILE IT LASTS"

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

Control the raging spirit that dwells within him

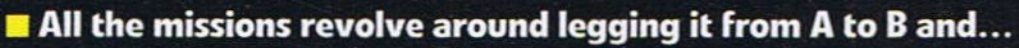
CHASE ME, CHASE ME

Do we really need another radar-centric action game?



■ Fed up chasing markers on a map? Then you're out of luck.





■ All the missions revolve around legging it from A to B and…



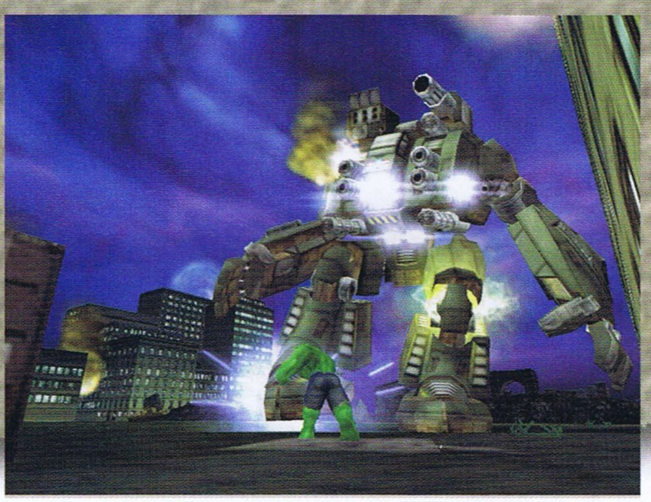
■ …executing an objective. It's like a big green *Rogue Leader*.



△ The church is Hulk's main base, and it's from this hideout that moves can be bought, secret files can be read and missions are handed out.



△ There's enough diversity to the tasks you have to accomplish.



△ Encounters like these are *Ultimate Destruction*'s finest moments.

place up at your leisure. The second option is a whole lot more fun.

So in many respects, *Ultimate Destruction* holds up pretty well, and the combat and challenges are actually an improvement on *Spider-Man 2*'s template. Also there are plenty of nice ideas in there – the feeling of being the Hulk is conveyed far better than in any previous games, and the journey through Story mode is satisfyingly destructive while it lasts, even if it does get a little repetitive and frustrating at times.

But unfortunately, despite ticking all the right boxes for all the things you'd want in an Incredible Hulk game, it can't quite beat Spidey to the title of 'best superhero game ever'. Sure, it's enjoyable, but despite all the smashing, it isn't as memorable as *Spider-Man 2*. Of course Spidey's game wasn't without its problems, but there were a number of facets to that game which will forever be burned into our memories – the first time you leapt off the tallest building in the city, for example, or the first time you swung out to Liberty Island, or chased Cat across the city. There's nothing in *Hulk* that quite matches it, and while both have their flaws, *Spider-Man 2* made up for many of its weaknesses with charisma and a level of presentation that isn't evident in *Ultimate Destruction*.

Much like the green brute himself, there's a lack of grace to the game – with some pretty weak design choices like fetch and carry missions that traverse two separate loading points in as many minutes, (when really there wasn't any need) and a frustrating difficulty curve that seems to revolve around suffocating the green giant in relentless rocket fire.

True, issues like this don't prevent *Ultimate Destruction* from being a lot of fun, but they do stop it from being truly essential, which is ultimately something of a shame. because there *is* potential here.

This is very enjoyable on the whole. Care has been taken with the subject matter (which will mean a great deal to fans) and there's obviously been a great deal of effort put into making the best Hulk game that's ever been. As it stands it's an entertainingly destructive romp and one that puts down good foundations for a sequel…

GERAINT EVANS

HIDDEN FILES

After every story mission, you unlock files which give details on the plot. It's a nice touch, and the voice-overs add an extra dimension to the story. However, it feels like a bit of a cop out, a means of getting information across with minimum effort, which could possibly have been conveyed in a much subtler way…



■ Hulk is well represented.
■ Plenty of chaos and destruction



■ An ugly game.
■ There are some framerate issues.
■ Can be frustrating.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Spider-Man 2
Activision
NGC/96, 84%
A similar format to Hulk, although it's just that little bit better.



6 VISUALS

It isn't exactly the prettiest game in the world.



7 SOUNDS

Meaty effects, nice voice work, but forgettable music.



6 MASTERY

Technically not great, but smashing stuff is always enjoyable.



8 LIFESPAN

Very tough, and the challenges offer good replay value.

VERDICT

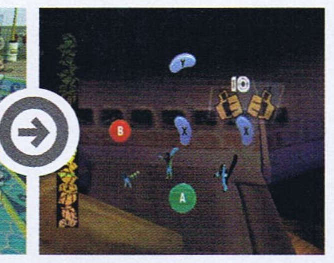
While it doesn't look stunning, this is still a good action title and the best Hulk game to date.

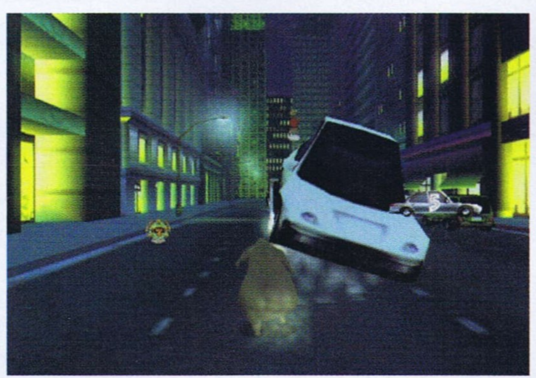


MINIGAMES

In an attempt to cram every gaming genre from stealth and platforming to dancing into Madagascar, there are a couple of minigames to buy at the zoovineer shop. You can play a tough round of mini-golf, have a go on the shuffleboard, or try some dancing at the Lemur rave.







Gloria sprints when she eats a red chilli. Funny, last time we ate a raw red chilli we sprinted, too. To the nearest bog.

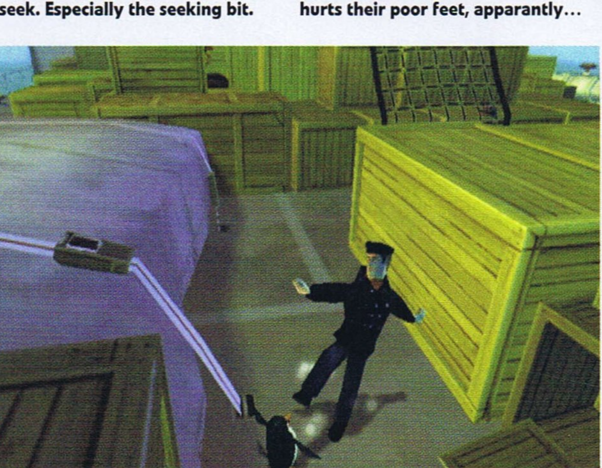


The guard isn't very good at hide and seek. Especially the seeking bit.



Giraffe's can't walk on the street – hurts their poor feet, apparently…

The crab is terrified as Alex uses his powerful roar attack. Being a lion, he could probably crush the crab, but then this is



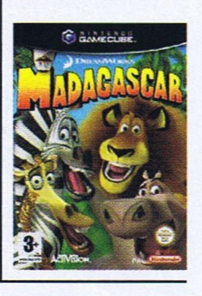
They're violent, penguins. Make them spin around and they can take out security guards by hitting them in the shins. Good word, penguin.

MADAGASGAR

Marty the zebra – he's the new Sam Fisher…

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	TOYS FOR BOB
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	3
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



The Daily Mail may bang on about videogames causing anti-social behaviour, but if anything is going to encourage kids to swear and throw things, it's games like *Madagascar*. It's about as good as *Catwoman*, only instead of having Halle Berry's bum on screen, you're staring at the back end of a zebra as he fails to make yet another jump and falls to the bottom of the level. Cue cussing.

Playing as the four main animals from the film, you escape from the zoo in New York before heading off to the African island of Madagascar. But sadly, while *Madagascar* is solid, it is dull and unoriginal.

Games like this prove that stealth really should be left to the grown ups. Obviously this isn't aimed at Metal Gear fans, but there's no need for the security guards to be so unbelievably dumb. For example, if you can't hear or see a zebra when he's walking through the zoo, booting hay and chatting to his monkey pals, then it really is P45 time.

It's only when the action speeds up that things get briefly exciting – for example, playing as Melman the giraffe, you leap from bus roofs to shop awnings in a rush to get to Grand Central Station – but mostly it's just irritating platforming action mixed with basic stealth elements.

And saying it's for children doesn't really work as Gamecube is home to the best kid-friendly games in the world. If you want to get a game suitable for an 8-year old, keep searching the M section for *Mario Sunshine*. It'll be cheaper than this, too.

GAMES LIKE THIS PROVE THAT STEALTH REALLY SHOULD BE LEFT TO THE GROWN-UPS

TOM EAST



- Play as the four main characters.
- Good minigames and arcade games.



- Incredibly annoying platforming.
- Rubbish stealth with crap guards.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Super Mario Sunshine
Nintendo
NGC/73, 96%
We always say this, but this will always be the best platformer on Gamecube.



5 VISUALS
The film looks great, but the game looks dull and lifeless.

5 SOUNDS
Chris Rock wise-cracking for hours on end…

4 MASTERY
Not the best example of Gamecube platforming.

4 LIFESPAN
It will only take a day, but there are some minigames.

VERDICT
What's the point in playing *Madagascar* when you could be playing something like *Mario Sunshine*?




NGC 50

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Like someone vomited on a game disc



This game is so bad we've made Charlie stand in the corner. Now stay there and think about what you've done!



Yes, there's platforming. Yes, it's utter rubbish.


Just look at the idiot-boy run, the fool.


Damn you Wonka, how dare you inflict this on us!





INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	TAKE TWO
DEVELOPER	HIGH VOLTAGE
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	2
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£30



CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

One golden ticket you won't want to find.

It's rare to find a game that provides so much, but *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* does it all: boredom, frustration, irritation, the works.

It's not laughably bad because that would mean the developer had actually achieved something. Instead it's just dull and monotonous. There's little reward for doing anything other than hitting the off button. Okay, there's a passing similarity to the movie and there are levels based on the Dahl book that weren't in the film, but that's all it's got going for it.

Most of the time is spent running around directing Oompa-Loompas – Willy Wonka's disturbingly ethnic, midget work force. They can be issued the orders wait, follow or work. And each has a talent. But, rather than adding strategy, it simply throttles what little fun there may be.



"BASIC PLATFORM JUMPING MADE SOUL-CRUSHING THANKS TO AN ABYSMAL CAMERA"

The problem is that everything is achieved by getting someone else to do it. That is of course assuming you can keep hold of the little buggers. They have an amazing gift for getting stuck behind trees and under ramps, or running on the spot and waiting for you to retrieve them.

What little there is for you to do beyond issuing commands is basic platform jumping made soul-crushing thanks to an absolutely abysmal camera.

This may be intended for a junior audience, but even children will struggle to enjoy this total entertainment failure. It won't take long before even the little 'uns realise that each level consists of a single idea (such as repairing a switch to open a door), repeated over and over. Rather than buying this, spend the money on real chocolate instead and eat it until you're sick. You'll have more fun.

LEON HURLEY



- No one is going to *make* you play it.
- Sorry, that's the only plus point.



- No fun.
- No challenge.
- No point.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Super Mario Sunshine
Nintendo
NGC/73, 96%
You might need help if you like *Charlie*... Still, you'll have a lot more fun playing this.



5 VISUALS
It's all very big and colourful but it's very bland.



6 SOUNDS
Repetitive music loops that will drive you completely mad.



4 MASTERY
Over simplistic in design, scope and ambition.



6 LIFESPAN
It could take a while, but that's because you'll be stuck.

VERDICT

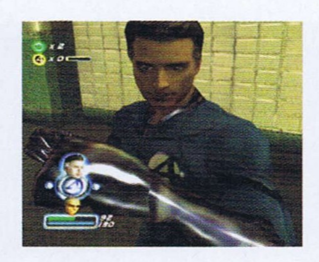
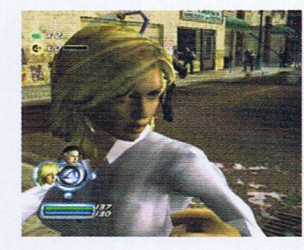
Totally devoid of fun for any age. Non-existent level design and about three ideas repeated endlessly. Steer clear.

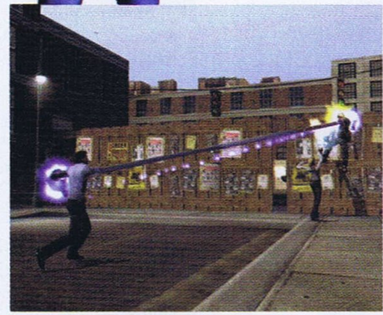
NGC



"The word average given a face"



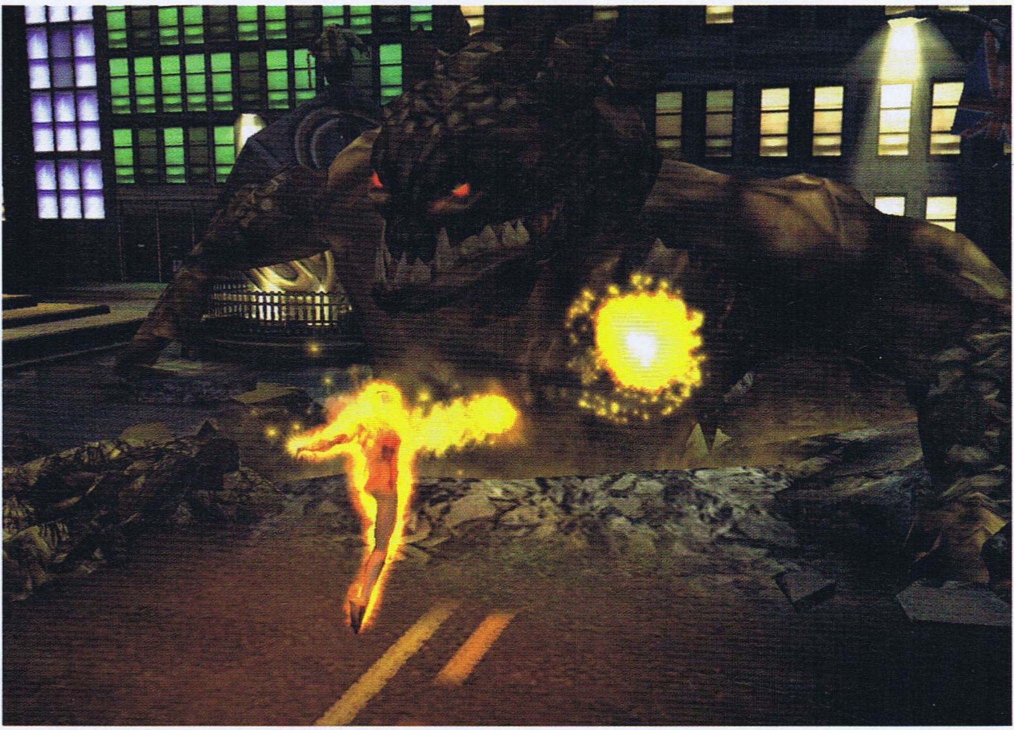





Δ Reed's stretchy skills in the comic help him solve many conundrums. Here, he just… fights.



Δ If he had any sense he'd join a circus freakshow. Superheroes get paid naff all.



Δ It looks like the most impressive set piece ever seen. Like it wants to change your very world. It isn't. It doesn't. Avoid.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	7 STUDIOS
RELEASE DATE	NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
MEM. CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£35



FANTASTIC 4

Or Reed, Ben, Johnny and Sue, as they like to be known on the weekend.



Δ The Thing's belly flop attack is a semi-amusing highlight.



Anyone expecting greatness can consider their expectations trampled as of this moment. The Temporarily Entertaining Quartet? Certainly. The Sort Of Exciting-ish Posse? Possibly. But Fantastic? Forget about it.

It was always going to be a combat game, but did it have to turn out this simplistic? *Fantastic 4* is the word average given a face, and it's a part of that most overlooked of genres – a linear roving beat-'em-up.

Attacks are limited to varieties of light, heavy, and special hits unique to each of the four characters: Thing with his wild strength, Human Torch with his, um, fiery personality, Mr Fantastic with his elastic capabilities and Invisible Girl with her cracking pair of norks. She can also turn invisible, but it's an underused feature and not as exciting as her front end assets…

The main problem is that the basic act of clobbering a bad guy just isn't satisfying. It feels a little lazy and is not hard-hitting enough, relying on flashy pyrotechnics to mask the simplicity of the combos. We're not complaining that it isn't sufficiently adult for us, just that it's not exciting enough.

But it's not actually a complete disaster – because the Fantastic 4 function as a team, the large scale all-in fights are enjoyably hectic, and there's a tactical side to the combat, without which this would have been truly brown.

FANTASTIC 4

Not exactly deserving of the name



Δ Sue's shield makes many parts of the game too easy.



Δ Reed's fists of fury.



Δ Storm basically sucks. Unlucky, F4 fans.



Δ Fighting the minions of the nefarious Moleman. Yawn.



IT'S A SET-UP!

Set pieces are all the rage these days. Like trying to escape an exploding space station, for example. Fantastic 4 has it all. Pity none of them are particularly exciting, then.

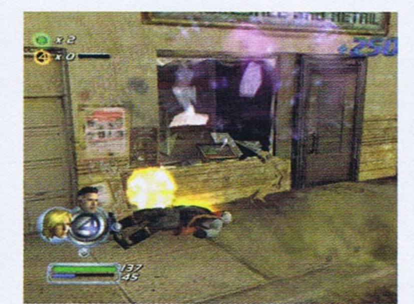








Δ In its defence, when all the characters are involved the fights are at least visually exciting.





By switching between characters, you can combine their skills to win fights that would otherwise be impossible. For instance, if one character gets backed into a corner, don't bother trying to battle your way out, just switch to another and open up an attack on the bad guys from behind. You can also combine superpowers to great effect – one good tactic is to use Invisible Girl's force shield to protect Mr Fantastic, who can then use his stretchy arms to reach out and attack enemies beyond it.

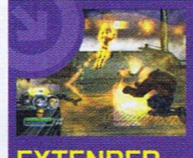
It's this strategic edge that is the most fun element of the game, so it's hard to understand why the plot couldn't have been altered slightly to prevent the characters from being constantly split up, thereby often reducing the game back to button mashing.

Every objective completed or enemy killed earns you points. Points serve two functions: they can be used to upgrade moves for each character, and to unlock bonus content.

This should have been massively entertaining, but only an inexperienced gamer could fail to see it for what it is – plain lazy. It's just an excuse to limit your move set and prolong the lifespan by making you replay on harder difficulties purely for the points. Last time we checked, that was inhibiting, not upgrading.

As for the bonuses, besides the usual array of concept art and magazine covers, there are unlockable Fantastic 4 comics, but they're just extracts. How unfair is that? You've shelled out all your notes and they can't even throw a couple of complete comics in there? Cheap or what?

DUNCAN LEIGH



EXTENDED PLAY

If you want to extend your 'fun' in the Fantastic 4 universe, there's an Arena mode, which lets you duke it out in practice rooms with various different sets of enemies. It's a good place to go if you want to try out an upgrade and still have the option to reset without saving if it turns out to be a load of rubbish.

> **"ONLY AN INEXPERIENCED GAMER COULD FAIL TO SEE IT FOR WHAT IT IS – PLAIN LAZY"**



- Exciting large scale fights, visually at least.
- Co-op mode spices things up a bit.



- More than a little repetitive.
- The unlockables are unexciting.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Spider-Man 2
Activision
NGC/96 84%
Free roaming city, brilliant fights – this is how superhero games should be done.



7 VISUALS

Uninspiring, but detailed, smooth and shiny.



5 SOUNDS

Average voice acting combined with bog-standard effects.



5 MASTERY

It is tactical, but the fighting is simplistic at best.



6 LIFESPAN

Co-op helps, but do you really care about half-arsed unlockables?

VERDICT

Not even exciting, this isn't as fresh as we might have hoped for. Hang on to your cash until *Ultimate Spider-Man*.







DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION MARIO MIX

Play that funky music short, moustachioed, Italian plumber-man.



PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	NCL/KONAMI
RELEASE DATE	NOW (JAP), OCT, UK
PLAYERS	1-2
MEM. CARD PAGES	3
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	¥6,800 (£35)



Nintendo have been getting super chummy with some of the biggest game developers in Japan. As a result of this massive Nintendo love-in, we've been treated to the likes of *F-Zero GX* from Sega's Amusement Vision, *Star Fox Assault* and *Donkey Konga* from Namco, and the *Oracle of Ages* Zelda games, courtesy of Capcom. Now Konami have also joined Club Nintendo, and have put together a Super Mario-themed twist on its hugely popular Dance Dance Revolution series. So, is Mario the new John Travolta or what?

Just in case you've never witnessed the phenomenon that is Dance Dance Revolution, the basic idea is that you stand in the middle of a mat which has four arrows marked on it around your feet (Up, Down, Left, Right), underneath which are sensor pads, kind of like a massive cloth joypad. When like arrows connect at the top of the screen, you have to step on the appropriate arrow in time. If two or more arrows are displayed simultaneously, you have to jump and land on those arrows. And, if all goes to plan, you may actually display some sort of rhythm with the movement of your feet. What we're trying to say is, in DDR, you have to dance. Kind of.



△ Mario sees red. Game Over.



△ Bowser's lair is a scarier place to dance than anywhere on earth. Even Coventry.

DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION: MARIO MIX

Tap your feet to the Mario beat



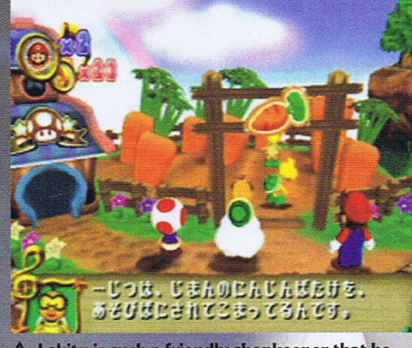
△ Toad gets everywhere in this game. Cheeky little fella.

△ Mario gets an A, Waluigi hangs his head in shame…

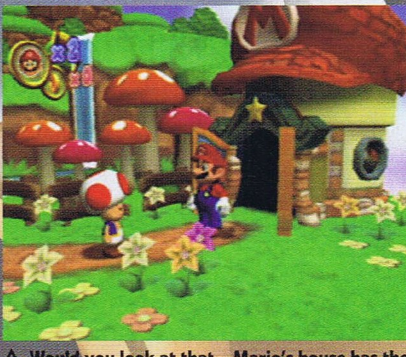
"Restore harmony to the Kingdom"



△ As the age-old saying goes, 'put your hands in the air like you just don't care.'



△ Lakitu is such a friendly shopkeeper that he guides us through part of the first world.



△ Would you look at that – Mario's house has the same hat as him! Aaah, bless.



△ If you're in the market for some power-ups, then Lakitu's shop is the place to be.



△ "We're dancing our way across the river!" It's the Mushroom Kingdom's equivalent of 'The Wheels on the Bus,' you know.



Unusually for a Dance Dance game, however, *DDR Mario Mix* has a Story mode. Bowser has nicked some musical crystals from Princess Peach's castle (typical) and scattered them across the Mushroom Kingdom. Mario and Toad set out to recover them from foes such as Waluigi, Wario and, ultimately, Bowser himself in order to restore harmony (see what they did there?) to the Kingdom.

Your progression through the Story mode's five game worlds is automated. You set off from a small house and reach a river that can't be crossed unless Mario dances on a boat. Makes sense. At this point a dance event is triggered and it's time to shuffle your feet on the included dance mat. Provided you get to the end of the song, even if your performance isn't ranked very highly, you can move on to the next event.

In this regard, *DDR Mario Mix* plays similarly to the Mario Party games: there's a 20-40 second interval between playable events, during which time Mario and Toad exchange some banter. At the end of each of the five worlds, boss characters challenge Mario to a dance. Win it and you'll get the crystal needed to retune the Mushroom Kingdom.

Coins are awarded for smooth moves on the dance floor and you can spend your money at Lakitu's item shops. Mostly, the items available are power-ups, 1-up mushrooms and the like, but



TOP MARKS

In Ranking mode, you can check out the complete records of every single one of your performances in every game mode. Auto-save is turned on by default, so a regular check or two is an incredibly helpful way of charting your progress from poorly co-ordinated dance-loser to the top of the pops.

MINIGAMES



Minigames offer a great alternative to disco dancing. In a strange way, lots of the normal stuff Mario does (jumping, collecting, running) comes to life in these excellent minigames.



Minigames are selected from a menu, just as dance tracks can in Free mode. The names of the games are pretty fitting. This one's called RunRun…



This one involves running away from an unchained nasty. You have to run on the dance mat, landing your feet alternately on the left and right arrows.



Here Mario is about to be buried under an avalanche. Step left and right to dodge the giant snowballs and save a plumber's life!



Super Mario Bros' end-of-level flagpole finale, recreated. The left and right arrows are quite far apart, so you have to look like an idiot and run bow-legged.



sometimes you can purchase a new song to play in Free mode. And Lakitu will also present you with keys to unlock later parts of each area.

The one major thing separates DDR with Mario from DDR without ingenious minigames, such as the glorious Whack-A-Goomba and a manic reinterpretation of the flag run from the original Super Mario Bros, give the dance mat a new lease of life, which even the mat itself probably didn't expect.

"FOR THE FIRST TIME IN KONAMI'S SERIES, THERE ARE NON-DANCING MINIGAMES"

Mario is the incredibly cool minigames. For the first time in Konami's series, there are non-dancing minigames which make use of the dance mat. A great deal of imagination has gone into these and they are, without exception, great fun. Some of the most

Initially in Story mode, there are only two difficulty levels available – easy and medium – both of which are, if you've ever played DDR before, very easy. We managed to complete Story mode on our first run through, which took about an hour, and we



OI, FATTY!

Enter your name, enter your weight in kilos (2.2lbs is equal to 1 kilo) and get dancing. Once you've set up a profile, the game will automatically keep a record of the calories you burn. You can then relate this information to your disapproving spouse/parents/siblings and they'll think that gaming is actually good for you. Maybe.



△ 'Shall we dance?' Probably not what you would expect to hear in this situation, and it's probably more disturbing…

△ 'How can we cross this river, Toad?' Probably by dancing.



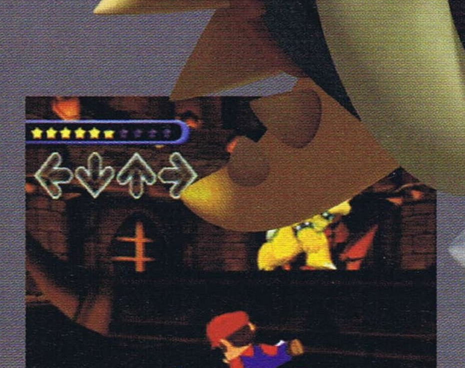


MOVE YOUR FEET

You can play DDR Mario Mix using the standard Gamecube controller, but what fun is that? In case you were wondering: not much at all. Happily, a dance mat is included.



△ ***DDR Mario Mix*'s second world is based on *Super Mario Sunshine*. Very pretty.**



△ Why bother doing the Mario when you can breakdance?

lost only one life in the process (and that we can put down to the distraction of a boiling kettle).

There are two harder modes which can be unlocked, however, and these reveal some minigames and tunes which don't appear in the easier settings.

There's also something called EX mode, which changes things by moving away from the standard step-on-arrows gameplay. Bob-ombs, Goombas and Koopas move up the screen, and when they hit the top, you hit them by stepping on the arrows. This is the first time in any Mario game where you can physically jump on the heads of baddies – how about that?

Story mode is very entertaining while it lasts, but it's hardly an epic. Besides which, all of the minigames and tracks from Story mode appear in Free mode anyway, and that's where most of your time will eventually be spent.

Free mode is actually the same as the main game in other Dance Dance Revolution titles – the Story mode in *DDR Mario Mix* is really something of a bonus, although,

DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION: MARIO MIX

Tap your feet to the Mario beat



Mario ends a musical number in the obligatory 'jazz hands' fashion. Less hands, more dance, plumber boy!









THIS IS OUR SONG



FACE-OFF

Bros have reformed! Yep, our dancing heroes can battle it out against each other in some kind of discotheque showdown. Two dance mats will make things a bit fairer.



ENERGY

Berii Haado mode (no slur, that's how the katakana reads) takes both players out of the local community centre and into an Ibizan club. Our advice: drink plenty of water.



FAIR PLAY

To make it fair, one player can dance at a lower difficulty level than the other. Here, Mario, disguised by a northern arrow, is suffering a little bit more than his kid brother.



MTV STYLE

Although the screen is split vertically, there's no black line to delineate the split. In motion, this gives the impression of a snazzy music video. Pretty nifty.

confusingly, it's presented here as the main game. In Free mode, you can select any of the tunes you've unlocked, choose a difficulty level and dance away. In two-player mode, the screen splits vertically and you're competing for the highest rank and, er, your dignity.

"STORY MODE IS VERY ENTERTAING WHILE IT LASTS, BUT IT'S HARDLY AN EPIC"

In any DDR game, the soundtrack is hugely important, and this is where *DDR Mario Mix* really impresses. There are so many classic tunes nestled among the back catalogue of Mario games that we must confess to having forgotten about many of the songs here. We were really blown away by the remixes from *Super Mario Bros 3* – the theme tune to that legendary game is nicely spruced up, as are the tunes from *SMB3*'s underwater sections. Great stuff.

Although most of the tracks in *DDR Mario Mix* are instrumentals, there are a few cheesy MC moments thrown in. Usually when a dance takes place it's in some sort of Mario World setting (inside Bowser's castle, for example, in Boo's Ghost House, or on *Super Mario 64*'s ice slide) and there's often a big cast of background characters who dance along. And some of them, Goombas included, even provide backing vocals to the tracks. At times like this, DDR Mario Carnival would probably be a more appropriate title.

With the minigames and the fun, if simple Story mode, *Dance Dance Revolution Mario Mix* has a lot more going on than in many DDR games. Sure if you're a dance master it might be a bit easy, but then moving around in the plumber's world to a classic Nintendo soundtrack has got to be better than prancing around to crap, obscure J-Pop.

JONTI DAVIES



WHAT'S NEW?

This is a common feature in Dance Dance Revolution, where everything you unlock (whether they be songs, minigames, levels, whatever) is recorded and updated as you progress. Think of it as Konami's way of saying thank you.



- Top selection of classic tracks.
- Crazy, innovative minigames.

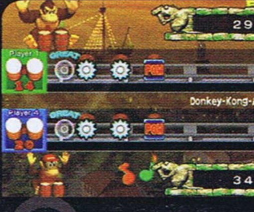


- Not quite enough long-term depth.
- DDR veterans will find it too easy.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Donkey Konga
Nintendo
NGC/99 88%
Gets your arms moving just as frantically as DDR works your legs.



7 VISUALS



A solid and colourful depiction of the Mushroom Kingdom.

9 SOUNDS

Superb remixes of all the best tunes from Mario games.

7 MASTERY



Dancing isn't quite as much fun as drumming with DK.

5 LIFESPAN

Only 25 songs and a bit easy. Story mode is too short.

VERDICT

The Story mode is a bit simple, so stick it on Free mode and shuffle your feet to the best Mario tunes. Good fun.



NGC 77

NGC STAR GAME

△ Part of the pleasure is in exploring the simplistic, yet absolutely gorgeous, toy-like environments. It's just like a mini-Metroid!







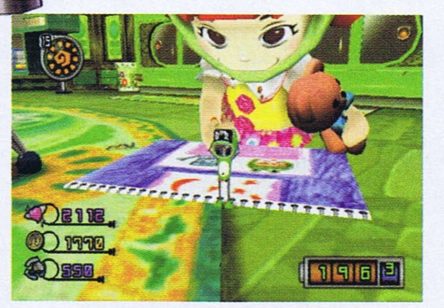


CHIBI ROBO

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	SKIP
RELEASE DATE	NOW (JAP)
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	6
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO





△ This girl seems to want her lost frog dummies.



△ The telly robot helps Chibi around the house.

He's tiny but mighty. Chibi delivers a very pleasant surprise.

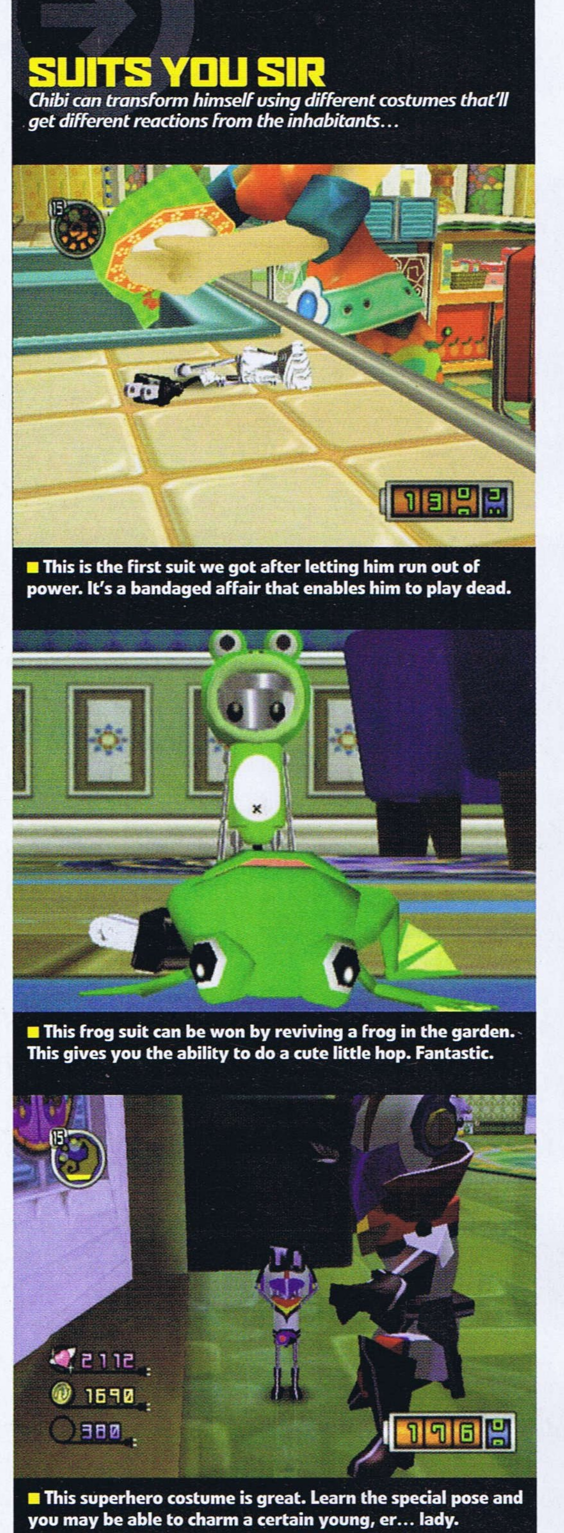
It's testament to the quality of a game when you find yourself compelled to play despite having spent the last three hours not knowing what you're doing or why. Hell, even after the fifth hour we *still* weren't sure what was going on. But still we kept going; enjoying each new hour as much as the last. *Chibi Robo* certainly has something going for it then, but it's difficult to pinpoint exactly what.

It all starts on a young girl's birthday. You play the part of Chibi, a house-cleaning robot who's given to her as a present (from what we can tell). Once the festivities are over, you're given a little home in the corner of the living room, from which you're free to explore the house. To a point.

You see, being a robot, Chibi relies on electricity to get around. Every action Chibi does, from walking and climbing to jumping and falling, uses up energy. If Chibi stands still, the power will wind down more slowly, run around and he will expend more energy – so your capacity to explore is determined by how much power Chibi has in his battery. Thankfully, this can be replenished at the various plug sockets located around the house, and so part of the strategy involved in exploration hinges on whether or not you can get there and back in time to replenish your power. But there's more to it than that, of course.

SUITS YOU SIR

Chibi can transform himself using different costumes that'll get different reactions from the inhabitants…



■ This is the first suit we got after letting him run out of power. It's a bandaged affair that enables him to play dead.

■ This frog suit can be won by reviving a frog in the garden. This gives you the ability to do a cute little hop. Fantastic.

■ This superhero costume is great. Learn the special pose and you may be able to charm a certain young, er… lady.



△ Befriend the egg men for military training.



△ Create ladders out of junk to aid exploration.

△ These secret rooms hold loads of cash.

Being a house-cleaning robot, it's your task to make sure the house is nice and neat. There are various kinds of mess to be dealt with, such as pieces of paper, sweet wrappers, sticks and crumbs – all of which can be picked up and stored inside Chibi's body.

Other messes include water, oil and mud, which can be cleaned using a toothbrush that Chibi picks up early in the game. Cleaning up household mess earns you happy points – little hearts that gravitate towards you after a job well done. When Chibi returns home and a happy point quota has been met, heart points are converted into extra battery capacity, allowing Chibi to travel further or do more actions between recharge stops.

This is the most basic of the game's mechanics, but there's even more

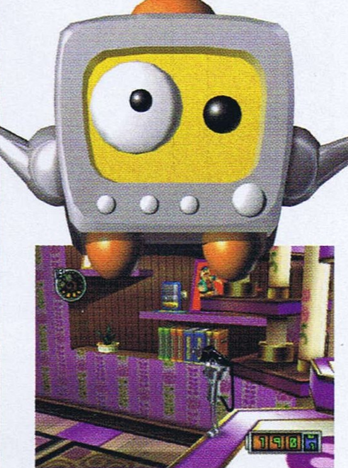
> "IN SOME RESPECTS, THE LANGUAGE BARRIER ADDS TO THE EXPERIENCE"



"A very welcome breath of fresh air"



The brush is used to scrub surfaces. Tougher stains give more happy points.



Chibi can pick up his power cord to help him move around faster.





WE CAN BUILD YOU

Chibi starts off as a basic robot, but he gets surprisingly versatile…



FLY CHIBI, FLY!
Chibi's first gadget is his little rotor blades. These drain a fair amount of power, but allow him to hover over chasms or down from high ledges without taking damage.



DIRTY SCRUBBER
The first item you find is the toothbrush. This allows you to clean mud, foot prints and mop up any oil or water. Initially, this is your best source of happy points.



SAMUS ENVY
Not sure what this is called exactly. It's an arm-mounted gun that can be used to shoot off teddy stamps blocking your way, or take out enemies for extra junk.



SUCK IT UP
You find the syringe in the girl's bedroom (?!), and it's used to puff out air or suck up water to spray. We used this on a dehydrated frog to bring it back to life.



DIG DUG
The spoon is a little tricky to find, but once you have it, you can use it to dig soft earth – great for finding new items, or better, for planting any seeds you buy.

to be done. The game has a day and night cycle, and the house changes during each phase. During the day, the family are awake and Chibi can talk to them and fulfill requests for them to earn more happy points. During the night, the toys in the house come to life and, again, these can be interacted with to earn Chibi new skills, earn more happy points, or even unlock more rooms in the house to explore.

Because of the language barrier, progress is understandably slow, because it's not instantly apparent who needs which item and what needs to be done in a specific area, but in a strange kind of way, it adds to the feeling of mystery and the sense of discovery when you find something new. In some respects then, the language barrier almost *adds* to the gaming experience.

And even when you do find yourself utterly flummoxed as to what you have to do, there's always plenty to keep yourself occupied: cleaning up mess to help Chibi's power capacity grow, collecting coins and junk to help upgrade Chibi's abilities, or simply wandering around the house. In fact, the exploration element is very well done, and is almost Metroid-like in the way the game unfolds. You look around the room using free look and consult the map to find areas you've not accessed, with the realisation that you need a special item, or maybe a new skill in order to reach them – making a mental note to go back there at a later date.

In essence, it plays like a gigantic puzzle, as you learn which items do what, how they can be useful, and how they can be used together to complete goals. Cleverer still is the night and day cycle. Different NPCs have different behavioural patterns

> **"CHIBI'S WORLD IS BRIGHT, CLEAN, COLOURFUL AND A DELIGHT TO EXPLORE"**



WHAT'S THE STORY?

Being in Japanese, any kind of plot is hard to figure out. There are a number of odd stories running in tandem, though. There's an old robot hidden in the basement that needs to be fixed (which seems like the main story), but the mother and father also seem to be feuding – something that Chibi seems to be able to help out with…

THROUGH THE KEYHOLE

This ain't your ordinary two up, two down…


Each room is almost like a little world in itself, with all manner of furniture to climb up and explore – some areas are a little tougher to reach than others, mind…


Chibi actually jumps automatically – it doesn't play like a platformer.


The handy map screen will give you a complete view of all your surroundings.



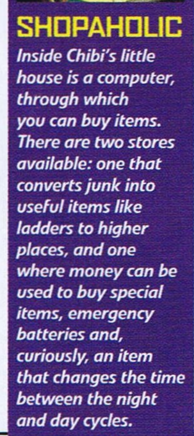

△ If Chibi runs out of battery power, he'll die and lose a load of cash.


△ There are simple, incidental puzzles to help earn happy points.

at different times and require various tasks to be completed depending on the time of day. Part of the puzzle is planning your route through each day/night, ensuring that you can complete your tasks while still doing enough cleaning. It's all very clever stuff and, crucially, it never feels like a chore.

The ace in Chibi's hole, though, is its immaculate presentation. The environments are brilliantly designed. Everything from the characters to the over-sized room furniture has an exaggerated chunkiness. Chibi's world is bright, clean, colourful and a delight to explore, exuding a warmth and charm we've not felt since *Pikmin* and *Animal Crossing*.

Likewise, the sound is perfectly pitched. There's a certain cheekiness to the unobtrusive music, and every action that Chibi does has its own instrumental sample. Cleaning or walking over different surfaces, for example, is almost musical in itself – it complements your actions and adds to the atmosphere of the game rather than simply accompanying it.



SHOPAHOLIC

Inside Chibi's little house is a computer, through which you can buy items. There are two stores available: one that converts junk into useful items like ladders to higher places, and one where money can be used to buy special items, emergency batteries and, curiously, an item that changes the time between the night and day cycles.

now that we have it in our hands, we're genuinely surprised by just how fascinating we found it. It can't help but put a smile on your face and it's undoubtedly one of the most quirky and unique games we've come across.

Unsurprisingly then, we really loved this. After a summer drought that had only the brain-aching

> **"IF WE'RE ABSOLUTLEY HONEST, WE'RE FINDING IT VERY HARD TO CRITICISE"**

If we're absolutely honest, we're finding it very hard to criticise *Chibi Robo* in any way. After a brief play at E3, we always knew it was going to be good, but weirdness of *Killer 7* to amuse us, this is a very welcome breath of fresh air that's fully deserving of the following score…

GERAINT EVANS



■ Incredibly charming.
■ It's just so, well, *lovely*.



■ Doesn't get your heart racing…
■ … but then, who actually cares?



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Animal Crossing
Nintendo
NGC/98 91%
Another relaxing Nintendo jaunt into a sugary, super-cute game-world.



8 VISUALS
Reminiscent of a sweet shop: bright, colourful and chunky.

8 SOUNDS
Hilarious speech samples and quirky but appropriate music.

8 MASTERY
Huge, well designed and completely free of glitches.

8 LIFESPAN
A decent-sized adventure, but with little replay value.

VERDICT

The gaming equivalent of a nice comfy duvet. This is original, charming, beautifully designed and should not be ignored.



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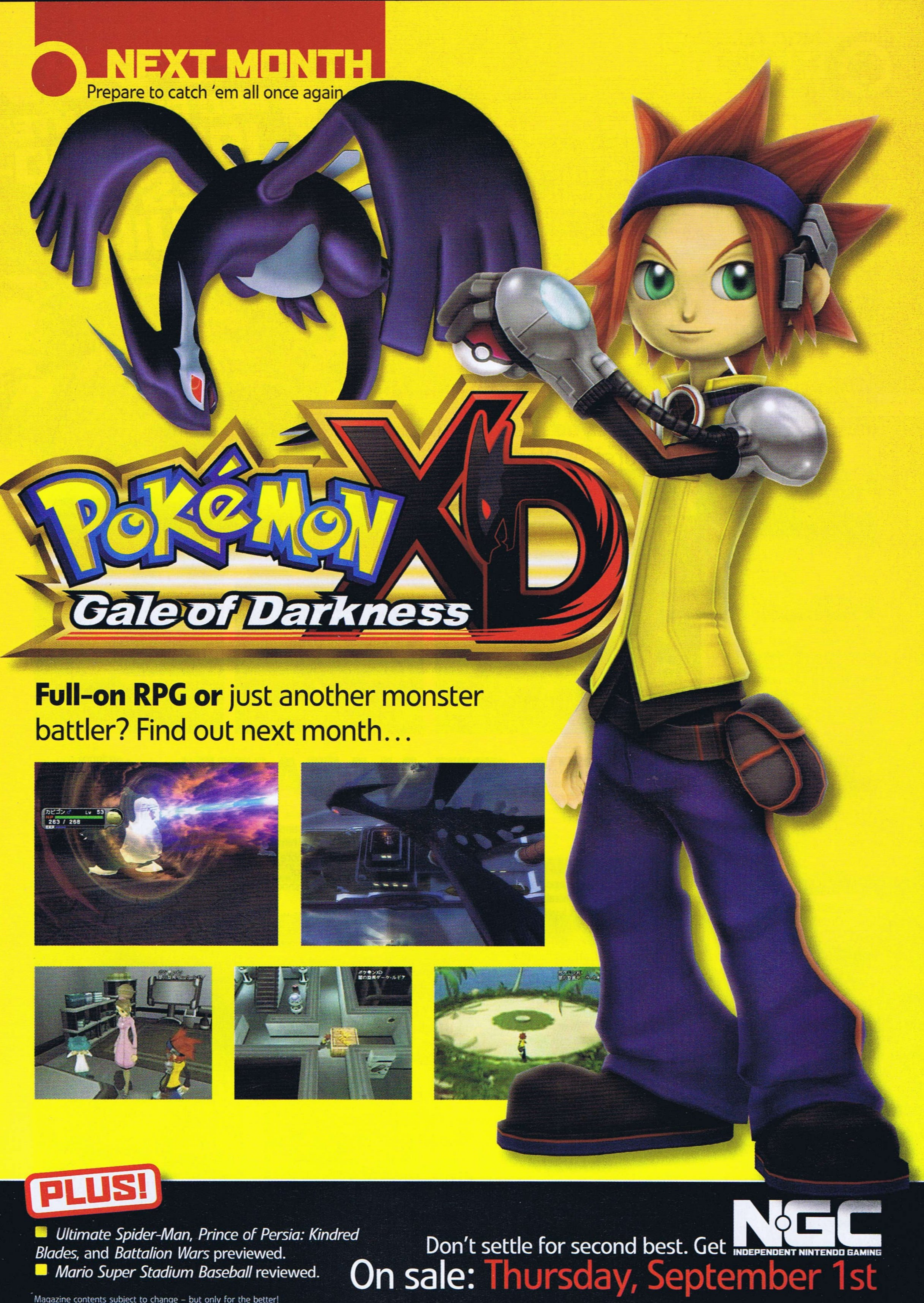
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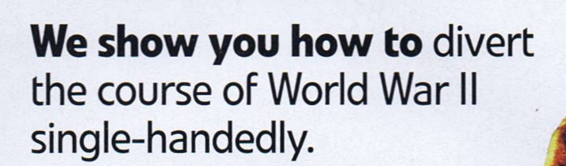
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MEDAL OF HONOR EUROPEAN ASSAULT

NGC GUARANTEE
100% PRO-TESTED GUIDE



We show you how to divert the course of World War II single-handedly.



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

You play as US super-spy Oliver Holt as he goes about bringing peace, justice and the American way to those war-loving Nazis. Different from previous incarnations in that it introduces some aspects of squad control, *MOH: EA* covers several real life battles on a large scale.







PART 1: ST. NAZAIRE

MISSION 1 (PROLOGUE) OPERATION CHARIOT

Head right along the docks and shoot the pairs of guards hiding predictably behind each set of crates. Use this level to master the basics of *MOH: EA* – stay low or go prone whenever possible, and always try to fight peeking out from behind cover, never in direct sight.

Head towards the green smoke to find Beck (1-1), then stay close to him as you fight your way back to the ship. Use grenades to split up the clusters of enemies then mop up the rest with your Thompson (1-2). Run up the ship's gangplank to complete the mission. Easy.

MISSION 2 RAID ON ST. NAZAIRE

Go right and follow the waterfront around. Use the crates as cover and try to direct your men behind different sets of crates to split enemy attention and make flanking easier.

Set a charge on the shore artillery gun here (2-1) then go around it to find an underground passage entrance. Turn left at the fork to encounter Klaus Mueller.

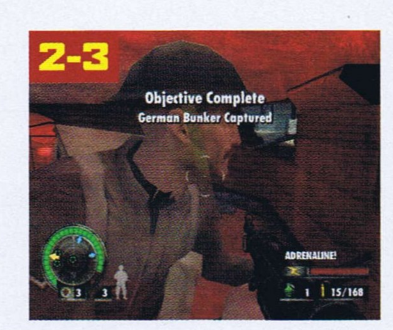
Either lean from behind a crate and rain grenades on him, then rush at him with your Thompson or – the far more preferable method – use a full bar of adrenaline to simply rush him and shoot/batter him to death easily.

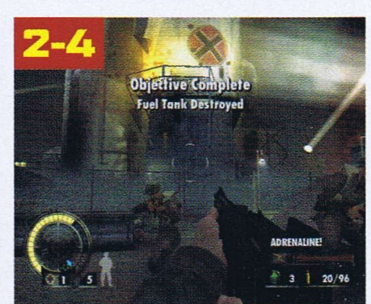
In a room to the left of where he was hiding, you'll find the V2 rocket specs, (2-2) then continue along the passage behind where he was.

Turn right to get outside and stay to the side of the bunker ahead. When you get close, lob some grenades through the murder hole, then head inside to capture the bunker (2-3).

Follow the bunker passage and when you emerge in a warehouse, climb the







WHAT WE SAID LAST ISSUE!

Sadly, this wasn't as good as we thought it would be. The features that were expected to breathe more life into the franchise have come far too late in its life-cycle to be effective. Which, is a shame.



MISSION 4 ESCAPE AT DAWN

Move up the street, use a grenade to take out the machine gunner, then check the building for supplies. Continue onwards, hugging the left-hand wall. Lean out to shoot the machine gunner (1) when you see a hole in the right-hand wall.

Continue up the waterfront and go upstairs into the ruined house to engage the Germans across the road. When most are dead, cross the road and your men will blow the house door open.

Head upstairs to the balcony. Lean out from the door frame and take out the soldiers in the building opposite. Go outside, then go upstairs in the next building along – crouch down as a tank is close by. Stay back and look out of the window to get a bead on the tank – the allied planes come and destroy it (2) without you having to do anything! Enter the church and use your adrenaline to waste Koster (3), then grab the documents he was holding (4) before going out of the hole in the church wall and setting a charge on the radio tower (5).

Move out past where Koster was in the graveyard and rush up to the low wall at the left of the central path. The tank will stop next to you, but it's unable to shoot you, making it easy for you to throw grenades to finish it off before running behind it to escape (6).





Mop up the rest of the troops in the courtyard with your SMG.





stairs to your left and follow the walkway and staircases right to the top of the warehouse. When you're back outside, shoot the barrels to take out the guards. Climb over the pipeline and go up the stairs on the upstanding fuel tank.

Ignoring the respawning soldiers, place a charge on the control panel at the top then sprint back downstairs and through the gap in the fence ahead to escape the exploding fuel tower (2-4).

Turn right from the bunker entrance and go up the staircase to gain the high ground. Use the metal plates as cover from the Germans in the courtyard.

Continue along the walkway, down the stairs and up the set opposite. When you encounter an anti-aircraft gun, set a demo charge to blow it before going down the stairs ahead and back to the ship. Now your mission is complete.

MISSION 3 LIGHTS OUT IN THE PORT CITY

Move into the courtyard and use your men as distractions to get close to the murder hole – letting you throw grenades in – then mop the rest of the troops up with your SMG (3-1). Blow the door of the bunker off on your right and go into the warehouse on the far side. Blow up the three V2 rocket hulls in here then (3-2), in the next building, use the boxcar as cover before moving into the docks. Go immediately down the left hand ramp outside, and onto the U-boat pier. There are three charges to be placed – one at either end and one on the U-boat's central tower. Place the charges at each end first and the central one last (3-3).

In the next warehouse, use the upstairs balcony to direct your men across the courtyard below, then move down there yourself and use a grenade to take out the machine gunner.

Inside the main building, use your saved adrenaline to waste Brenner (3-4). Check the left-hand offices upstairs on the balcony he was on to find the blueprints (3-5).

Go down to the engine room, set three charges on the ends of the three engines, then leave the way you came and follow the officer who picks you up outside. There, you will see a wire on the floor disappearing behind some crates – follow it to find the plunger. Press it to blow up the generators.



The best way to kill Brenner is to use any adrenaline you have stored up.



There are two offices. The documents are in the furthest one on the left.

PART 2: NORTH AFRICA



MISSION 1 OPERATION BLINDFOLD

Take the left-hand path and use your sniper rifle to clear the ruins ahead, then move up to them and take out the sniper on the cliff up to your left. To the right of that cliff is a path – follow it up the hill, go into the hut there and throw the switch to blow up the radar dish (1-1).

Throw grenades over the hut's low wall to destroy the tank that's waiting there, then go back down the hill and into the trench ahead. Turn left into the bunker and follow the tunnel – the tank manuals are in a small office about halfway down the passage. When you emerge at the far end, go into the ruins on your right. There are grenades scattered about liberally, and the tank will be facing away from you, so it's a doddle to roll grenades beneath its tracks and take it out permanently.

Head back to the trench and move to the cliffs at the right of the road that heads into the enemy base. Go past the wounded soldier and fight through the recon plane wreckage ahead, building up the adrenaline bar so that you can take out Adabold Brecht with it (1-2). Make sure he has stopped running before you activate adrenaline or he'll escape you and it'll be wasted. Look in the tail end of the fuselage behind him and you'll find the recon documents.

Head back through the small cave and right into the enemy base. Use your sniper rifle to take out the major enemy threats – the machine gunners ahead and on the bunker roof – and let your men deal with the rest. Use grenades to blow up the tank on your left – it's partially obscured by crates – and the tank hangar door opposite it will open, revealing the other two tanks – blow these up too (1-3).

Finally, move to the main bunker – the enemy inside keeps respawning, so just run up to the main door, set a charge and blow it. Inside, follow the only path through the bunker to escape. Feel free to use some adrenaline here – it would be a shame to die at this point.

MISSION 2 OPERATION V2 SILENCE

Go left into the office and you'll find a small area with a pair of offices on the left and right with a passage continuing in between. Ignore the middle passage, go left and blow the door off the cell here to free the first prisoner. You then need to go through the second office and do the exactly same – you'll have to go into the cell and free the second prisoner manually, though. Now, return to the office that was at the start of the level, go down the right-hand path, and then down the ramp at the back and to the left of the generator room to find the third and final prisoner (2-1). Next, head upstairs into the theatre, killing all comers to boost your adrenaline bar.

Chase Schneider into his offices and use adrenaline to gun him down, then grab the info about the coded virus house off his desk. Approach the projector in the theatre to steal the V2 test film (2-2), then go back to the generator room and head right to find the ramp leading out of the bunker. Snipe the guards blocking your escape route and, once outside, lean out to snipe the machine gunners at the top of the two patrol towers. Go right down the side of the V2 hangar and halfway down you'll find an office where you can photograph the V2 schematics (2-3). You now need to destroy the tracks around the next corner, then meet the reinforcements ahead.

Run around the back of the tank, hugging the fence – there's no need to fight it – and around the next corner, enter the hangar. Throw the switch on the right-hand wall to let the reinforcements in to help clear out the warehouse. Go into the small control room up the stairs at the open end of the hangar, and throw the switch here. Go back downstairs and you'll now be able to place charges on the forwards support of the V2 rocket ahead (2-4) before escaping in a, er, real blaze of glory. Good work.



△ You'll find the evil Brecht hiding down here. The best tactic is to snipe him. Make sure you don't use your adrenaline until he has stopped running.







△ Shortly after you've killed Schneider, you will come across this projector. You need to steal the V2 test film from it for the boffins back home.



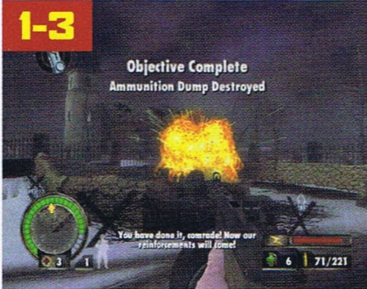
△ You will find the V2 schematics in an office in the hangar.



△ Place charges on the support to blow up the rocket.









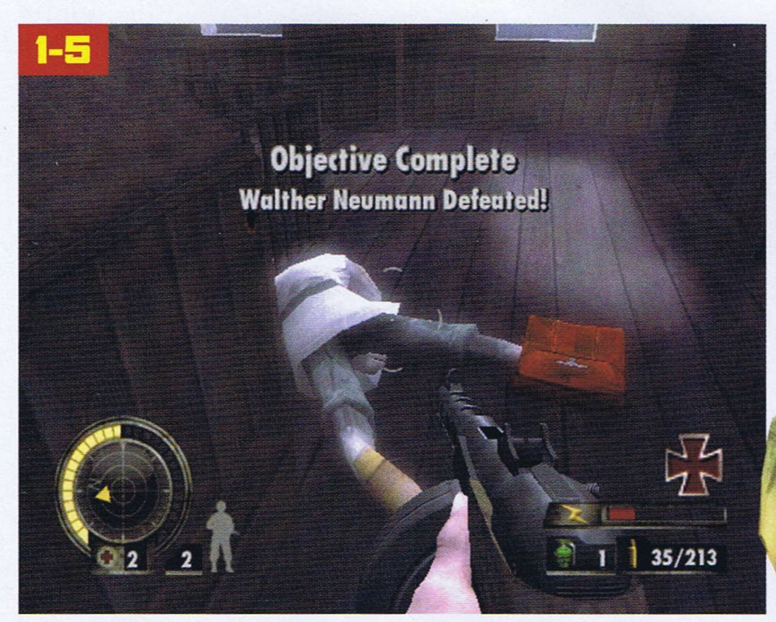
PART 3: RUSSIA

MISSION 1 ROAD TO STALINGRAD

Follow the road to meet up with the partisans, then lead your men left out of the cellar. Use the machine gun to take out the troops ahead, then defeat the tank at the top of the hill using the resistance's bazooka rockets that you are provided with. Fire the Nebelwelfer cannon on the hill to destroy the railgun (1-1), then go up the road, across the bridge and around the back of the railgun to find a second tank. Destroy it using the bazooka (1-2), then head along the street to the left to find the third tank you need to dispose of – this time using only grenades.

Check all of the buildings for ammo, then move up the church fence. To the left is the ammo dump you need to blow up (1-3), then, inside the graveyard, use the headstones as cover while you waste the enemy presence before putting an explosive end to the radio tower at the right of the church.

Enter the church through the hole in the eastern wall and use adrenaline to rush and kill Neumann (1-4). Grab the documents (1-5), then head to one of the windows upstairs that overlooks the graveyard. Lean out and use this vantage point to mow down the troops crossing the graveyard with your PPSH to complete the mission.



△ You will find Neumann in the church. Use your adrenaline to kill him, then pick up the documents that he drops. There won't be much further to go.

MISSION 2 CLIMBING MAMAYEV HILL

You will find the grenades you need to blow the tank up (1) in the house up ahead which contains the machine gun upstairs. Head west out of the house and then south when you get to the trench and meet the Russian officer (2).

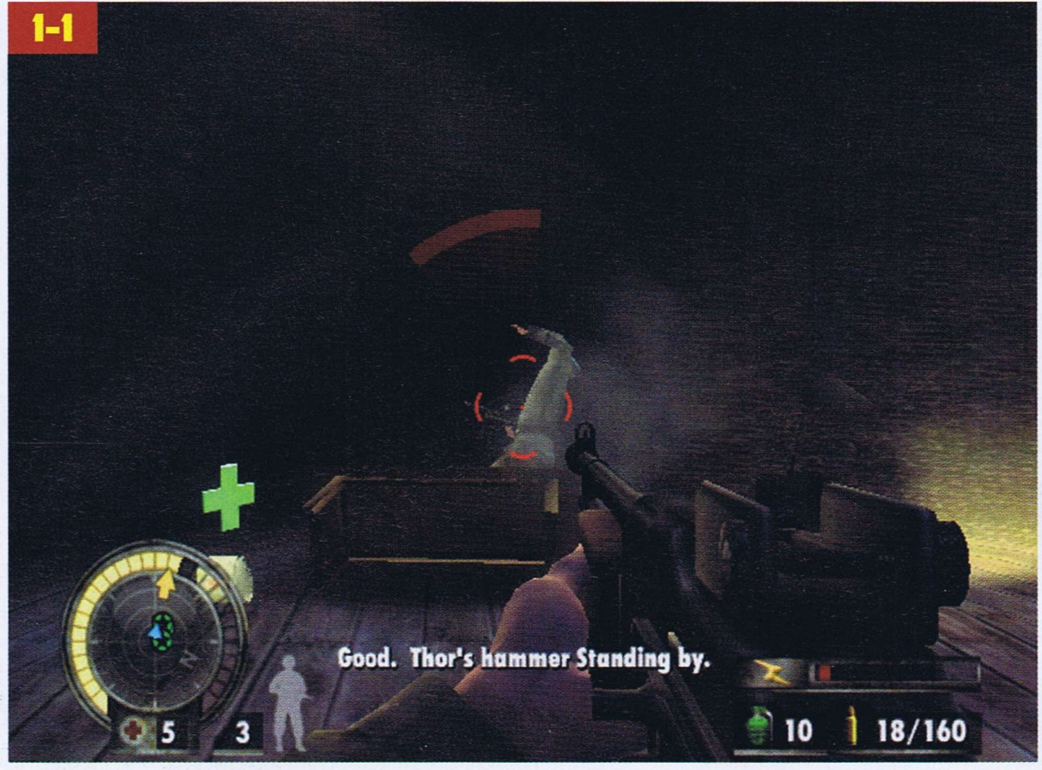
Follow the road around and use the machine gun before the bridge to kill troops in the village opposite. Then cross the bridge and enter the tunnel ahead to pick up a bazooka before sprinting towards the smoke in the middle of the road to set off the rocket strike signal (3).

Take out a second tank on the hill and use a demolition charge on the gates up ahead. Inside, turn left, grab a bazooka, then go right and up the stairs – use this vantage point to assassinate Gruebner (4) and take out the tank, then grab the heavy water logbook from his corpse. Follow the passage below the stairs and blow up the three artillery guns (7). Let your men clear the trenches outside while you move from door frame to door frame, leaning out to kill the troops.

Keep following the corridor to reach the map room. Lob grenades at the enemies inside and shoot the guard on the balcony. Head upstairs to the top of the landing to transmit the intelligence to the OSS (7), then blow up the intel cache at the bottom of the stairs to end the mission (8).



1-1



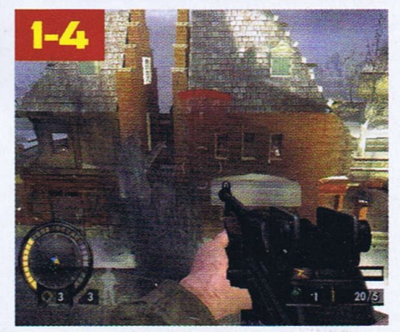
△ This guy isn't particularly hard, even though he's supposed to be a mid-level boss. As a result, the best strategy is to make sure that you don't waste your adrenaline here – keep saving it for later, where it will be put to far better use.

1-2

1-3



1-4



PART 4: BATTLE OF THE BULGE

MISSION 1 OPERATION V2 SILENCE

Man the machine gun and waste the passing Germans, then go northwest and enter the windmill. Fight your way to the top and kill the commander there (1-1). Use his sniper rifle to take out the guards in the compound, then head outside. Left of the church you'll see green smoke – meet up with the captain there.

After the briefing, grab the documents on your right, then pick up the bazooka. Outside, fire off the rocket launchers to the left of the doorway to take out the first tank, then use the bazooka on the second and third (1-2) from upstairs in the command post.

Move into the church and then go up the stairs at the back and to the right. Stay low as you pass the windows, then use the adrenaline to rush up the final flight and take out Kappelhoff (1-3) before looking across the street at the buildings there to call in an artillery strike (1-4).

Go to the top of the tower to find the C2, (1-5) then go back down the stairs, through the hole in the wall on your right and move past the two buildings opposite to meet up with more resistance members. Grab the bazooka and follow them to a broken wall. Use the rockets to take out the tank opposite, then use your sniper rifle to take out the guards to your right and below the bridge. Move down the snowdrift to the frozen river bed and place a demolition charge on the left-hand side of the bridge to take it out.

MISSION 2 FARMHOUSE LIBERATION

From across the bridge, snipe the soldiers in the windmill and house, then search them for health and ammo. Approach the farm's perimeter wall, then move to either end of it, sniping every target you spot – make sure you clear out both machine gun posts on the main barn – before blowing up the obstruction and entering the compound.

Turn left, blow up the artillery gun, then move into the small barn containing the tank before its machine guns rip you to shreds. Place a demolition charge on its rear (2-1), then move out to the west, making sure to stay low. Move right around the outside of the compound to find the last two artillery guns (2-2).

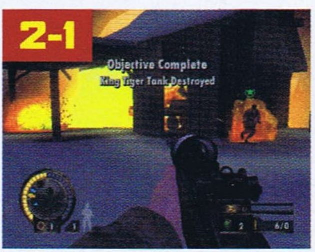
Check all the exterior buildings you clear and grab an enemy STG44 before entering the main barn through the hole in the near corner. Grab the shotgun that's lying near the Christmas tree and use it to clear out the upstairs and main barn. Be sure to lean from cover in the barn to nail the machine gunner, then head down the trap door next to him to find Manon (2-3) and Freder Engel. He is on his own – therefore leaning and shooting when he pops up will work a treat if you're out of

1-5



△ Obtaining the C2 is critical as you need it to blow up the town bridge – don't miss it the first time around as it's a real pain fighting your way back here.

2-1



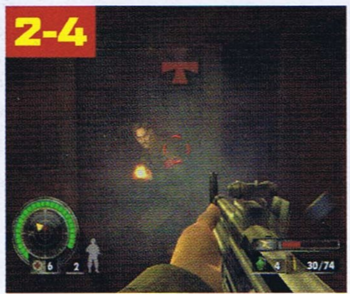
△ Place explosives on the tank in the barn and burn that sucker down.

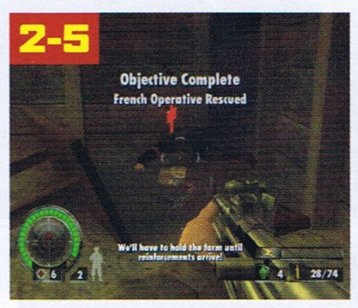
2-2

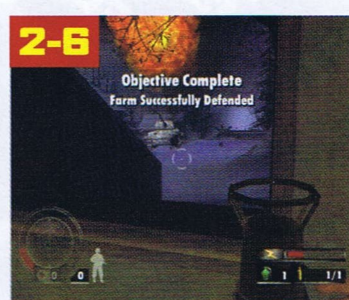


△ Be quick when you're setting this charge or you'll come under fire.









adrenaline (2-4). Grab the documents (2-5) that he drops, then take the bazooka rockets and head back upstairs.

Ignore the advice about using the pre-placed detonation charges in the yard: it's suicide. Instead, tell Manon and your men to cover the barn's main entrance and use the scoped bazooka to take out the incoming tanks from afar (2-6) – the ammo in the cellar respawns so this is easy, as long as you're quick to overcome the rapidly respawning enemies.

MISSION 3 OPERATION: VIRUS HOUSE

A tough mission this one – unsurprising really, as it's the end of the game. Our best advice is this – there are plenty of bazookas and a ton of health to be found in the trenches, which is rather handy since they are generally where you want to be. So if you only pop up out of the trenches for a couple of seconds at a time to make shots you'll be almost invincible.

So, move around the first bend in the road and drop into the trench to the right of the green smoke to radio the air strike co-ordinates (3-1).

Scavenge the trenches for bazooka ammo and, after taking out the machine gunners with your M1, make a dash past the three entrenched tanks and waste the Germans in the trenches behind them.

From here you can take out the three entrenched tanks at your leisure as they can't turn, and there's plenty more bazooka ammo, provided you don't waste it on the only moving tank.

Next, go north until you hit fencing, turn right and drop over the far side of the small hill. Then turn left to move back up the battlefield.

Again, make a break past the tanks and use the trenches to peek out while you shoot the troops rushing down the hill ahead. Go up it yourself, lie down while the plane takes out the tank at the top, then use the crate on your left as cover while you use your M1 to nail the machine gunners in the bunker ahead. Don't bother healing your men as they leave you here.

Now, you must try to stay alive from here on – use health packs as the end is impossible without adrenaline.

Blow the bunker door open (3-2) and then use some grenades to take out each cluster of enemies you come to in the corridor ahead.

Take things very slowly, backing off where necessary – the timer is lenient. When you emerge in the courtyard, wait for Von Schrader to appear at the machine gun to your right, then use adrenaline and the M1's ironsights to keep sinking rounds into him until he dies (3-3). Simple.

Quickly head back through the door you came out of and turn left, go up the stairs and grab Von Schrader's journal (3-4). Then throw the switch next to the machine gun post he was manning to cancel the bomb (3-5).

At last you can give yourself a hearty pat on the back for saving the day. You bally hero, you.



△ The best tactic here is to remain in the trenches. That way you won't come to harm from the incoming enemy fire and you can concentrate on the tank.



△ Blow up the bunker door to enter Von Schraeder's lair. It's payback time.



△ Don't rush – you'll make mistakes, and the timer is quite generous.



△ Once you've killed Von Schraeder, his documents, containing precious intelligence, are yours for the taking. Make sure you pick them up to complete your objective.



△ Go up into Von Schraeder's machine gun post and throw the switch below the gun itself. This will cancel the dirty bomb, and the world will be safe once more.

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TIPS EXTRA



KILLER 7

UNLOCK HOPPER 7 MODE
Complete Killer 8 mode.

UNLOCK KILLER 8 DIFFICULTY
Complete the game on the Normal or Hard difficulty settings.

PLAY AS YOUNG HARMAN
Complete the game on the Normal or Hard difficulty settings.

BATMAN BEGINS

UNLOCK EVERYTHING
Complete the game on any difficulty setting.

FANTASTIC FOUR

UNLOCKABLE ARENA STAGES

GUARD GRANNY LEVEL
Unlock 31 secrets.

SURVIVAL KILLING STAGE 2: BARGE
Unlock two secrets.

SURVIVAL KILLING STAGE 3 UNDERGROUND ARENA
Unlock four secrets.

SURVIVAL KILLING STAGE 4 TIKAL ARENA
Unlock seven secrets.

SURVIVAL KILLING STAGE 5 HORUS ARENA
Unlock 20 secrets.

SURVIVAL KILLING STAGE 6 ELEVATOR ARENA
Unlock 25 secrets.

SURVIVAL KILLING STAGE 7 SHIELD ARENA
Unlock 28 secrets.

UNLOCKABLE BONUS MATERIAL

BIOS 1: BIOGRAPHIES OF THE FANTASTIC 4
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 2000 points.

BIOS 2: BIOGRAPHIES OF THE CLASSIC FANTASTIC 4 VILLAINS 1
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 2000 points.

BIOS 3: BIOGRAPHIES OF THE CLASSIC FANTASTIC 4 VILLAINS 2
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 2000 points.

BIOS 4: BIOGRAPHIES OF ORIGINAL FANTASTIC 4 ENEMIES 1
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 2000 points.

BIOS 5: BIOGRAPHIES OF ORIGINAL FANTASTIC 4 ENEMIES 2
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 2000 points.

BONUS MISSION: LATVERIA 1
Complete the game on the Medium difficulty setting.

BONUS MISSION: LATVERIA 2
Complete the game on the Hard difficulty setting.

CONCEPT 1: ENEMY DRAWINGS
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 1000 points.

CONCEPT 2: BOSS MONSTER DRAWINGS
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 1000 points.

CONCEPT 3: CHARACTER PENCIL SKETCHES
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 1000 points.

CONCEPT 4: ULTIMATE FANTASTIC 4 SKETCHES
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 1000 points.

CONCEPT 5: ULTIMATE FANTASTIC 4 COMIC PANELS
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 1000 points.

CLASSIC FANTASTIC 4 COVER 1
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 2500 points.

CLASSIC FANTASTIC 4 COVER 2
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CLASSIC FANTASTIC 4 COVER 3
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 2500 points.

CLASSIC FANTASTIC 4 COVER 4
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 2500 points.

CLASSIC FANTASTIC 4 COVER 5
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 2500 points.

CLASSIC FANTASTIC 4 COVER 6
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 2500 points.

F4 SECRET 1: STAN LEE INTERVIEW 1
Collect 13 F4 icons.

F4 SECRET 3: DEVELOPER INTERVIEW 1
Collect 22 F4 icons.

F4 SECRET 4: STAN LEE INTERVIEW 3
Collect 26 F4 icons.

F4 SECRET 5: STAN LEE INTERVIEW 4
Collect 29 F4 icons.

F4 SECRET 6: DEVELOPER INTERVIEW 2
Collect 33 F4 icons.

F4 SECRET 7: STAN LEE INTERVIEW 5
Collect 35 F4 icons.

INTERVIEWS 1: MICHAEL CHIKLIS (THE THING) INTERVIEW
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 5000 points.

INTERVIEWS 2: IOAN GRUFFUDD (MR FANTASTIC) INTERVIEW
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INTERVIEWS 3: ZAK PENN & MARTY SIGNORE (WRITERS) INTERVIEW 1
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INTERVIEWS 4: CHRIS EVANS (HUMAN TORCH) INTERVIEW
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 5000 points.

INTERVIEWS 5: JESSICA ALBA (INVISIBLE WOMAN) INTERVIEW
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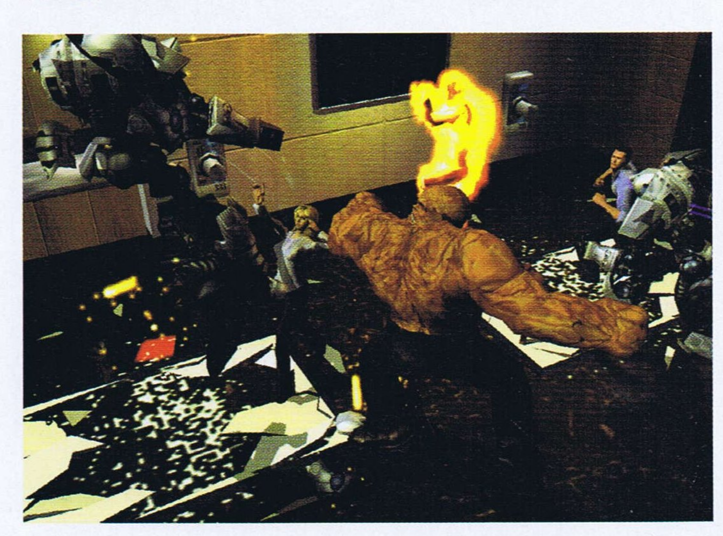
INTERVIEWS 6: ZAK PENN & MARTY SIGNORE (WRITERS) INTERVIEW 2
Buy from the Upgrades menu for 5000 points.

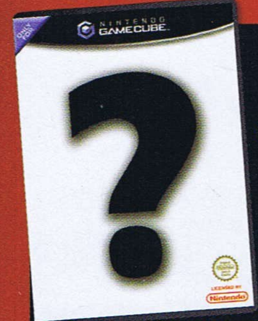
INTERVIEWS 7: JULIAN MCMAHON (DR DOOM) INTERVIEW
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ULTIMATES 1: ULTIMATE FANTASTIC 4 PANEL 1
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ULTIMATES 2: ULTIMATE FANTASTIC 4 PANEL 2
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ULTIMATES 3: ULTIMATE FANTASTIC 4 PANEL 3
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READERS' TOP TEN TIPS

Can you out-tip Tips Extra? Send in your hint-tastic helps and we'll 'sort out' the top tipster with a mystery prize from Geraint's 'special drawer'. Chances are, it'll be a game.



1. RESIDENT EVIL 4

What's that, Lassie?

At the very beginning of the game, you'll find a dog stuck in one of the Ganado's many traps. It may be more funny to kill it, but it's more useful to it alive. If you go over and free it, it will help you during the second boss fight. There's a good boy.

Neil Golding, Nailsworth

2. RESIDENT EVIL 4

Menu screen japery

You can play about on the menu screen. The C-stick moves the background and the L and R buttons zoom in and out.

Andrew Buckton, Liverpool

3. POKÉMON COLOSSEUM

Game saving glitch

You'll need a GBA and a link-up cable. Make sure you save first. Sell a Pokémon to the Colosseum, then just before it saves, turn the GBA off. You should now have two of that Pokémon.

Ann Davies, Rotherham

4. WAVE RACE BLUE STORM

Wave Park

Start Dolphin park in Free Roam mode and head straight forwards until you hit a small island. To the left of this are some buoys. These mark the location of a load of big waves, which you can use to jump off.

Ashley Naven, Biggleswade

5. ETERNAL DARKNESS

Make enemies ill

Get the Mantarok rune and enchant a weapon with it. You only need to hit an enemy once with it, it will carry on taking damage until it dies. Easy.

Kim Jong, London

6. KILLER 7

Use the map, Harman

Whenever you're stuck on a puzzle, go to the map screen. It could be that you're just not using the correct personality for the puzzle. The map screen will tell you which personality to use.

Gareth Evans, Swansea

7. SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY

Bad Sports

There are loads of digs at other games in *Chaos Theory*. For example, when you get to the lower floors of the I-SDF base, grab a guard and interrogate him and he'll make a thinly veiled joke about *Metal Gear Solid*.

Andy Grant, Margate

8. BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG

Sonic the Hedgehog

If you collect all five coins in a level, you will find a silver egg with Sonic the Hedgehog's face on it. If you hatch it, it will turn into Sonic.

Graeme Dawkins, Exeter

9. THE LEGEND OF ZELDA THE WIND WAKER

Cheap Tingle Things

In the Forsaken Fortress, you'll find a metal pot. If you jump into it with the Tingle Tuner equipped, Tingle will tell you that he's cut the price of Tingle Things.

Liam McAllister, Twerton

10. TRUE CRIME THE STREETS OF LA

Big Air

Get the Peel-Out upgrade then flip your car over on a jump. While upside down, wait, then use Peel Out for a massive air time bonus.

Jim Roberts, Huntingdon





Dr Kitts: everything you want to be and so much more.

Dr Kitts,
I'm a little stuck on *Resident Evil 4*; I can't find the pieces I need to unlock the door in the courtyard of the castle. I just don't know where to look. Help me!
Al Booker, Coventry

Dr Kitts tries to stop his hands from shaking. It's been too long since his last kill...
You need to be looking in the maze. The pieces you need to unlock the door are the two halves of the moonstone. These are found in different places in the maze; here's how to find them. From where you start, head straight on, turn left and go through the gate. The first half of the moonstone will be directly in front of you. From there, take the path to your left. Turn left, take the second left and head up the stairs. Turn right when you get to the wall and the second half of the moonstone is in this area. All you need to do now is go back to the door, combine the two moonstone halves and open that sucker.

Dr Kitts,
I'm stuck on the Cloudman level of *Killer 7*. I'm at a gate that needs an odd engraving and a password to enter it. I've got the odd engraving, but I'm absolutely stumped on the password. What is it?
Andy Bellman, Romford

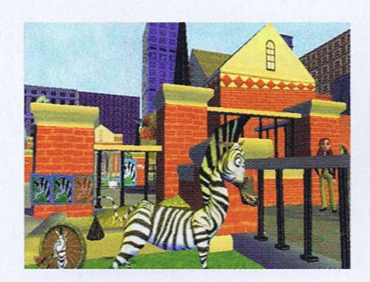
Dr Kitts laughs uncontrollably, secure in the knowledge that his gaming prowess is absolutely unsurpassable.
This is a tricky one that you can easily overlook, and one of the many moments in Killer 7 *where you really need a note pad to remember this kind of thing. You need to cast your mind back to the conversation you had with Travis. Remember what he had written on his t-shirt? If not, here's a hint: it said HUSTLE. Okay, that's not so much a hint as just telling you, but hey, what can you do?*

Dr Kitts,
How do you defeat the final boss in *Timesplitters: Future Perfect*?
Luke Parsons, Durham

Dr Kitts decides that now is not the time for mass murder, he could get in trouble.
The final boss of Timesplitters: Future Perfect *isn't too hard to defeat, and there are rumours of a glitch you can exploit. Firstly, the creature has two attacks: his claws and throwing fireballs. Strafe from side to side and don't stay in the same place. Wait for its eye to open and shoot it. It will take four or five shots to defeat. The supposed glitch is that if you get incredibly close to the creature, its claws won't hurt you. But it's a tough one, and we couldn't get it working.*



Got an Action Replay?
Whack these codes into it…



MADAGASCAR

Master Code
JJ65-E3KR-2GGM4
MZRE-4BXT-430F9

Infinite Health
4YWQ-T506-P6RVM
UEFU-PUXB-PA29X

Maximum Health
11A8-R7NV-519A9
1TCP-3CDZ-JCJMW

9999 Lives
P3N1-5V06-10BN9
CZWB-BHPR-G106E

9999 Coins
0B5N-XT0Y-CWMT4
6DWB-A6AP-RQEDQ

No Gravity (Hold A)
4CEJ-UK7D-QYD7M
27RM-3GEP-07Q33
ET86-YT44-NCHFT

FANTASTIC 4

Master Code
QY9F-N319-3TCU5
WG1K-46RA-T4MKY

Infinite Health
W5V6-GX1Y-E9NRB
768E-VXT4-X2KCU

Infinite Cosmic Power
0T3F-QVXP-GZMPG
DW5J-UW80-ZV9X5

KILLER 7

Master Code
H48J-TP07-82N9M
ADYR-6A0J-X6DET

Infinite Health
QPMR-REUZ-W0KHR
EN6K-YDGD-ND5ZT

Everlasting Ammo Clip
GFY4-GGCQ-16P5A
X2GR-ERTR-B1930

Full Blood Meter
RUQM-C9PJ-JCFBB
3NFM-4BMG-P048T

Infinite Vials
V3C3-JCDD-VWWB8
TBDJ-6ETM-PB16V



Infinite Serum
V88H-XUGC-4Z9AA
VMJ9-X64Y-353UR

All Personalities
9W1Q-KW4U-CH7H8
TKAK-BKG3-E78DM
4TH9-0Q7D-7DEM4

All Personalities Alive
AMNP-W5D7-XPPFT
AR5H-R2PB-PYE7C
NXW5-ZG7C-H3JWQ



Found an interesting tip, secret or quirk in one of your games? Send it into us immediately! Each month we'll stick the best into our Readers' Tips section. If yours is the number one readers' tip, we'll send you a game. Good, huh? Just don't send us cheat codes from the 'net…

YOUR TOP TIPS SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE AND BAG YOURSELF A PRIZE…

HERE'S MY TOP TIP…

IT'S FOR

AND THIS IS HOW IT WORKS

Name ....

Address ....

.... Postcode ....

Send to:
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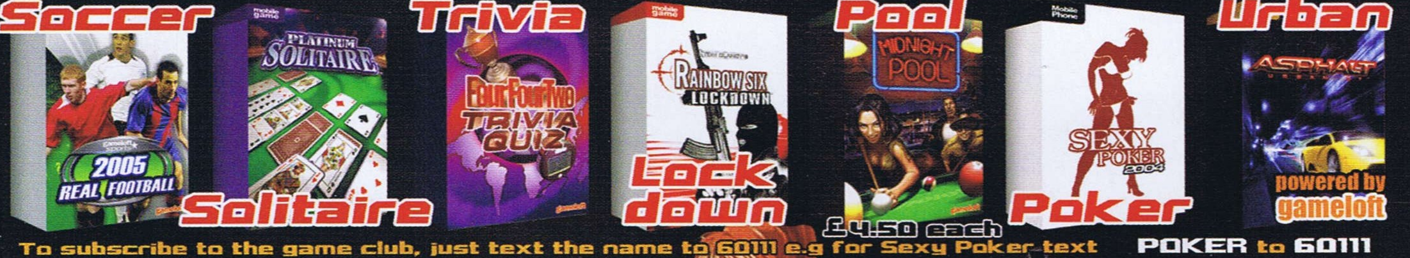
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Got something to say? Run out of stamps? Guards won't let you near a pen? Then log on to the interweb and 'get' us 'at'...

ngc@futurenet.co.uk

Include your name and address so we know who to credit the letter to. Do it! Do it! Do it now!

STAR LETTER

If you send us the best letter of the month, you'll receive a shiny new Gamecube (or GBA/DS) game from our bulging sack of shiny new games. Lovely.

"A dream"

All this talk about Nintendo Revolution being able to download and play old Nintendo games got me thinking. How about if Nintendo would enable net-play with the old games? How hard would that be? Just think about playing *Mario Kart 64* online – that would be a dream come true to many gamers. And while you're at it, why not allow them to download old Game Boy games and transfer them to empty cartridges for play on the DS? Maybe you could also play those games with friends via WiFi or single cart link. And since we've gone this far, why not allow them to transfer NES and SNES games to DS? Of course some changes would have to be done to the original game code, but nothing radical, I believe. This alone would be enough revolution for me.
Turo Halinen, Finland

You've made me drool down the front of my shirt, sir. Revolution has the potential to be the world's portal to more than 20 years of Nintendo history, which really is something to be excited about. Ed



△ Will Revolution remakes be online compatible? Imagine and salivate.





△ Retro games may smell slightly musty but at least they're cheap.

"You regret"

Have you noticed that nostalgia usually leads to buying something you regret? For example, I had great memories of *Starwing* and *Super Mario Kart*, but when I bought a second-hand SNES and games, it quickly felt like a bad idea. All of the games seem to have aged badly. Maybe it is just that they have been outdone by more recent titles, but the oldies never seem to be as good as they were when you first played them. Especially when you pay heaps to buy them again. That's what makes the Revolution special – at least they will be downloadable at good prices!
Craig Shipton, Crewe

So you think retro games are crap but you'll download them on Revolution because they're cheap? I've got a slightly stamped-on US copy of* Jimmy Neutron *that I'll let you have for a fiver – a very good price. Ed

Bonus Letters

If this gets posted in your mag please credit it to Andrew Leasley Killer Rabbit.
Andrew Leasley Killer Rabbit
Done. Ed

Pokémon is a great game and whoever invented it should get a medal. It gives us the chance to trap creatures in tiny balls with no legroom.
Kadeem Beresford-James, London
Sadistic but fun. Ed

Confucius say: Do not play Gamecube on fluffy rug; jammed with hair the disc rotation mechanism will be.
Adam Butcher, via email
Wise words. Ed

Inevitably some idiots would let their Gamecube get contaminated.
Ross Stevenson, Esher
Typical. Ed

Why not make a whole game consisting of "cut scenes" with interactivity?
Jonathan Trier-Brikner, Denmark
Because it would be utter shite. Ed

I was trying to stick.
Ingvar Gausden, via email
Have you managed it yet? Ed

"Red tape"

With the announcement of the Revolution, I was pleased to see that Nintendo is planning to use more accessible media in the shape of DVDs. I work as a tester for a well-known games company and my boss has discussed at length the expense and 'red tape' that Nintendo put in the path of third-party developers, and how this has discouraged us and, I suspect, many other third parties from developing for the Gamecube and GBA.

I'm not privy to the cost, but I know that it works out at a fair packet when you consider the special mini-DVD that the Gamecube uses, as well as the unique burners required to create the media. Then there's the hassle of having to put together expensive disks to make submissions to Nintendo which, if not approved first time, means even more expense. It all adds up and is seemingly one of the main reasons that our company steers clear of Nintendo. It simply becomes too much expense and effort for what is considered a small market.

With the introduction of DVDs, I'm hoping this opinion will change and that a number of third parties will now get on board and give Nintendo the backing it deserves. My only concern is the announcement that Nintendo is planning to 'encode proprietary Digital Rights Management software' within discs. I appreciate the need to stop piracy and I have massive respect for the lack of such activity on the Gamecube, but is this likely to turn into the expense and red tape that has discouraged developers in the past, and once again hamper Nintendo's support?
Mike Emeny, Lincoln

Given that many companies 'fingerprint' unfinished code using their own DRM techniques before they'll let the discs out of their sight, I don't see why anyone is complaining about the cost. It's all about market share – if Gamecube was in PS2's position, nobody would use the price of the proprietary media as an excuse not to make games for it. If Revolution games turn out to be as easy to copy as a DVD then that would be a far bigger reason to steer clear of it. Ed



HONOURABLE MENTIONS
Thanks to everyone who wrote in, including (but not limited to): Sam Spalding, via email; Chris Banerji, Ponteland; Jonathan Barron, via email; Zac Hill, Bideford; Jamie Rakoczi, Bath; Adam Martin, St. Helens; David Conlon, Ireland; Tom Gaffikin, London; Tai Li, via email; Ben Collings, Leicester; Mark Colfar, Surrey; Olly Parry-Jones, Bristol; Ben Hooper, via email; Jesal Patel, Bristol; Michael Bowen, via email; Jeffrey McClymont, via email; Paul Jackson, via email; Dom Whittall, Reading; Calum Nicholson, via email; Daniel Cohen, via email; Tony Southion, London; Theo Malings, Ireland; Gordon Yeung, via email; Kai Eric Heggset, probably from somewhere

"Long years"

I was just wondering whether all those people who kicked up such a furore about Rare being sold to Microsoft now feel stupid. I say this because they have done nothing worth mentioning since Nintendo sold them. Under the guidance and support of Microsoft they have produced *Grabbed By The Ghoulies* and that's it! In five long years! Nintendo sold Rare for mega bucks and in so doing lost nothing but a below average game. Everyone slated Nintendo at the time, but now it looks a wise move. Rare may well produce a brilliant *Perfect Dark*, but that will still only be one decent game in five years.

Another thing I would like to say is how happy I have been with Capcom. To be honest I had been slightly disappointed with Gamecube, but then *Resi 4* happened. Capcom also made the brilliant *Minish Cap*, which was one of the best Game Boy games I have played this year. Well done Capcom, and well done Nintendo for securing such great partnerships which produce such brilliant things.

A Robinson, via email

***The past few years, with no Rare titles to look forward to, have been slightly surreal. Flip knows where Nintendo would be now without support from the likes of Sega, Namco and Capcom.* Ed**

"Pointless"

When the Game Boy Pocket first came out, it was great because you could actually carry it in, well, your pocket. Then came the Game Boy Color, which had a great new feature that amazed us all. Next was the GBA, which had great new graphics, etc – but that is where I stopped buying the Game Boys. The SP was just a slightly more advanced GBA with no major new features. The DS was excellent and I thought that it would put an end to the Game Boy series, but no – now there's the Game Boy Micro. In my opinion it is absolutely pointless, because all that it will do is get lost more easily and cost more money. Why would anyone in their right mind bring out another Game Boy when there isn't really anything good about it? That is, unless Nintendo considers not being able to see the screen clearly a good feature.

Iain Mulkerrin, Aberdeen

***The screen is great – miles better than a mobile phone (which lots of people use to play games).* Ed**



Bonus Letters

If graphics were really all that mattered, N64 would have ripped PS1 apart and wiped the floor with its entrails by fashioning them into a rudimentary mop, using the spinal cord as a handle.
Tony White, Wells
***Fatality!* Ed**

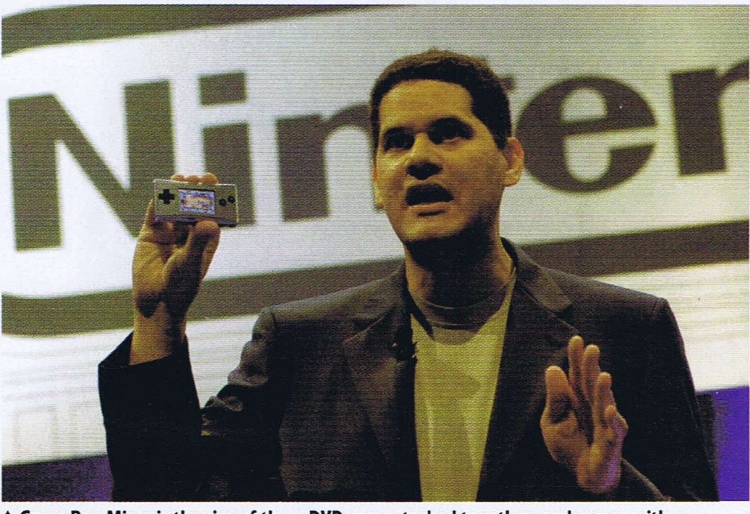
As soon as it had been in the hands of my friends they were captivated by it.
Sam Lane, via email
***That happens to me too!* Ed**

I strongly disagree with the view.
Sam Vishniya, Southampton
***But the view is so lovely.* Ed**

Sonic used to be about running from left to right, doing some fancy loops and looking cool, and it still is.
Dave Challis, via email
***Quite true.* Ed**

Everything bites arse.
David Morrisby Chesham
***Also true.* Ed**

I see in issue 109 that you used the noun "loan" as a web. This is A Bad Thing™, the word you are looking for is "lent".
"Ferg", via email
***And I think the word you were looking for was "verb". Touché!* Ed**



△ Game Boy Micro is the size of three DVD cases stacked together, and comes with a separate power supply stored in a backpack (not pictured) weighing 21 kilograms.

"The size"

Many people are going to experience difficulties with the GB Micro. Look at the size of the thing! Just look at Reggie holding the Micro at E3 – it's about a third of the size of his hand, and the screen is even smaller. How are you supposed to see games on that? I know you'll say they have brightened the screen on it, but that doesn't matter since I won't even be able to hold it. I don't see this competing with the DS, really. It just shows that Nintendo is still aiming at children and once again forgetting about the teenagers and adults that want to enjoy Nintendo games but can't.

Tom Longley, Maidstone

***It isn't supposed to compete with the DS, and I'd say it was aimed more towards gadget-loving blokes than small-handed children. Anyway, Reggie's hands are the size of house bricks, so don't read too much into that picture.* Ed**

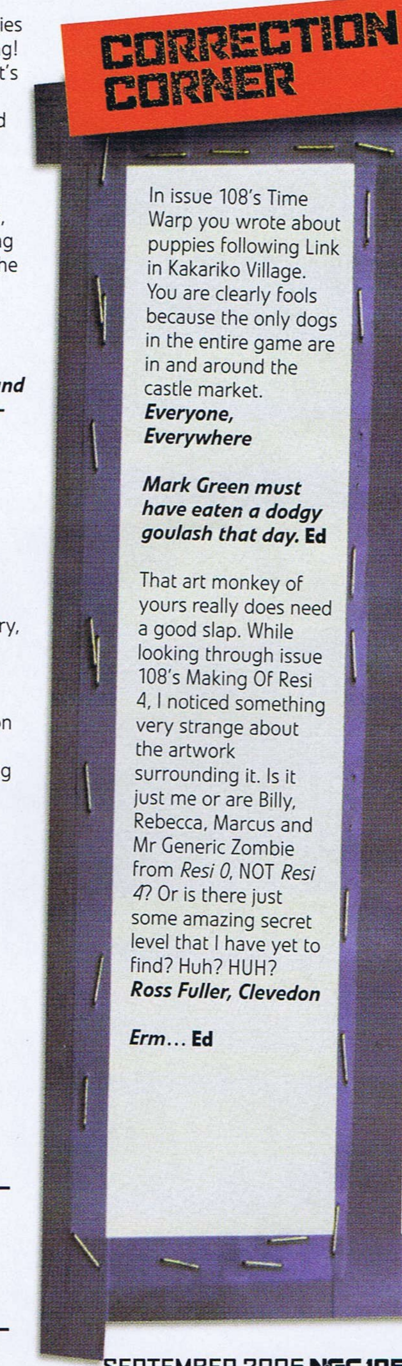
"His stall"

Just today I was walking past Colchester library, and over the other side of the square was a dude selling a whole bunch of those 500-in-1 SNES games, with one linked up to a telly showing the *Mario Bros* conversion on it! Cheeky beggar. He'd set up his stall next to a man who was selling bongs and rolling papers. Make your own minds up, children.

Carla Hodge, via email

***Pirated games are bad, mmmkay?* Ed**





CORRECTION CORNER

In issue 108's Time Warp you wrote about puppies following Link in Kakariko Village. You are clearly fools because the only dogs in the entire game are in and around the castle market.

Everyone, Everywhere

***Mark Green must have eaten a dodgy goulash that day.* Ed**

That art monkey of yours really does need a good slap. While looking through issue 108's Making Of Resi 4, I noticed something very strange about the artwork surrounding it. Is it just me or are Billy, Rebecca, Marcus and Mr Generic Zombie from *Resi 0*, NOT *Resi 4*? Or is there just some amazing secret level that I have yet to find? Huh? HUH?

Ross Fuller, Clevedon

***Erm…* Ed**

quite cold; Marc Di Luzio, Wimbledon; Pete Warbis, Poole; Adam Martin Saint Helens; Rob Smith, Manchester; Tom Harper, Bournemouth; James Cook, Birmingham; Chris Owen, Glastonbury; Luke Bowyer, Cheshire; Virgil de Waard, Netherlands; Dom Egan, via email; Sam Fielding, Southampton; Robert Clement, the Loveliest Part of Milton Keynes; Adam Cafolla, Ireland; Colm Carney, Ireland; Gilles Reuse, Belgium; Ben Dormand, via email; Dominic Whittall, Reading; Gareth Allmand and Patrick Lucas, Wrexham; Logan Bell, Bledington; Darren Greer, Belfast; Georgina Simpson, via email; Callum Black, Balham; Alan McCoy, Glasgow; Rowan Brown, Bath; Thomas Philpot, Huntingdon; Tim Osborne, via email; David Morrisby, Chesham. Ta!



MAILBOX

"Lady is my eccentric name"

"Jellybean"

Look what I found. It might possibly be the only ocarina-shaped jellybean in the world. I actually feel special.

James Thomas, Congleton



***You are special.* Ed**

"Screaming"

I recently realised why I think that *Resident Evil 4* and *Wind Waker* are the best games ever made. Although *Metroid Prime 2* is a fantastic game, at more than a few points in the game I was angry. Very angry indeed. The number of times I scaled the entire world, looking for a missile upgrade or energy tank, was staggering. Not only that, but some of the game's bosses were evil. Pure evil.

Other titles which had me screaming at my TV are *Timesplitters 3, Skies of Arcadia, Mario Kart* and, well, pretty much every game ever. I find the more I make myself play a game, the more I feel I have a duty to finish it and the more I feel like it becomes a chore. One more request in *Paper Mario*… one more blue coin in *Mario Sunshine*…

Of course, it's not all bad. I'm just obsessive and slightly mad. Some will argue *Wind Waker* was far too easy, but have *they* tried getting every single last bit of treasure? Eh? Didn't think so. That's why I love *Resi 4* so much. Sure, on Hard mode it is uber deadly, but for some reason I could shoot the heads off a million zombie things forever, and it's so addictive trying to upgrade your Broken Butterfly until you are an unstoppable killing machine! However, I'm too scared to try the Professional mode. I might make myself hate it…

Tom Cooper, via email

***More often than not, I also prefer shorter, easier games. Getting stuck two thirds of the way through a 40-hour RPG is no fun. Something closer to the 15-hour mark, like* Resi 4 *or* Pikmin 2, *but with loads of replayability for those that want to explore every last bit – now you're talking.* Ed**

"Cruel and hideous"

Upon discovering that my irritatingly frivolous younger sibling had once again doodled a lesbian on my copy of Othello (Act V Scene II if anyone's interested; right after the double homicide) I came to the conclusion that I must exact my cruel and hideous revenge. I repeatedly beat him about the head with a handily situated Gamecube controller until he passed out. I then tied to him to a chair using said controller, and made him watch as I deleted every single one of his save files.

David Shannon, Wirral

***I think you're taking the mickey now.* Ed**

"Dusty"

I've heard about a lot of strange things that have happened to Game Boy games (mainly in your magazine) but what just happened to me must be one of the weirdest. When my mum was cleaning our living room she picked up my GBA *Grand Theft Auto* and left it on the dusty mantelpiece, where it remained for about a month. I picked it up because it had a weird piece of fluff coming out from the bottom, and on closer inspection I realised it was a strange web-like material – when I looked inside there were at least 10 tiny eggs! I was going to take a photo but my dad put it in the shed to stop them from hatching in the house, and when I found it they had already hatched. I haven't tried it yet because I don't want the leftover bits to go in my SP.

Tom Bowes, Kingston Upon Thames

***Had it been a Nintendo game, I'd say they were probably Yoshi eggs and your dad has just cost you an Ebay fortune. But I shudder to think what kind of eggs a GTA cart might lay…* Ed**

"Never use it"

The DS is just so gorgeous. Brilliant and original features, a microphone, wireless online play and quality games. But I'm not going to get it. Despite how good it is, I'd never use it. I mean, I don't go on long journeys except for the school bus, where I wouldn't take it in case it got

CREATIVE CORNER

This month's top arts and crafts masterpieces…



'Duvel'

After a couple of Duvels (beer named after the devil himself, and there's a good reason for it), I started drawing a self-portrait. I made myself Link from the Zelda series. Hope you like it. I'm going to open another Duvel. The best beer we have in Belgium.

Emlyn Wouters, Belgium

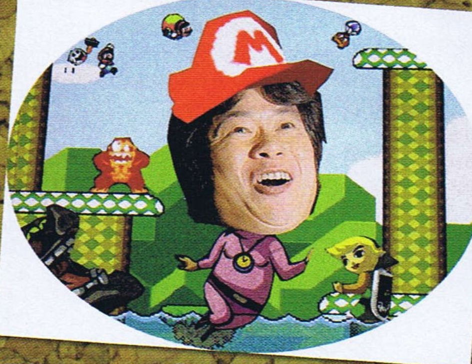
***This drawing was paid for by the Duvel Marketing Board.* Ed**

'Coolest'

Blue Link – the coolest of all Links. Lady is my eccentric name, given to me by one of my friends.

Lady Michael Richmond, Ilkley

***Cheers, Lady.* Ed**

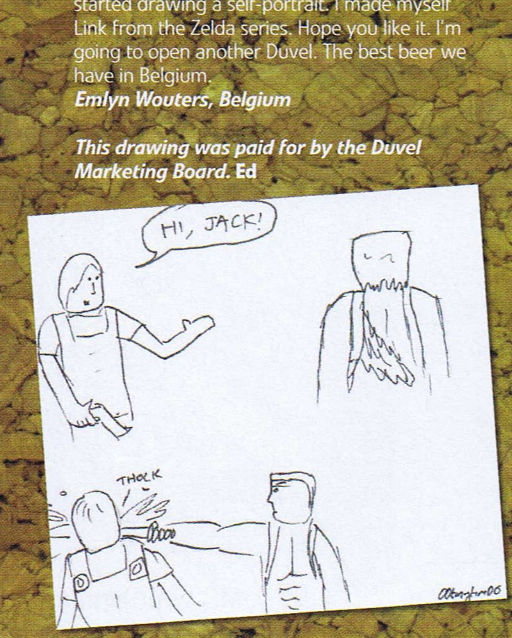


'Montage'

Here is a photo montage: Shigsy's Dreams. Enjoy.

Gareth Martin, Cumbria

***Sweet dreams.* Ed**



'Showdown'

I got bored, so I got some screenshots from your mag and drew the showdown between Leon Kennedy and Jack Krauser from *Resident Evil 4*. I've never actually seen this sequence, so some of it is guesswork.

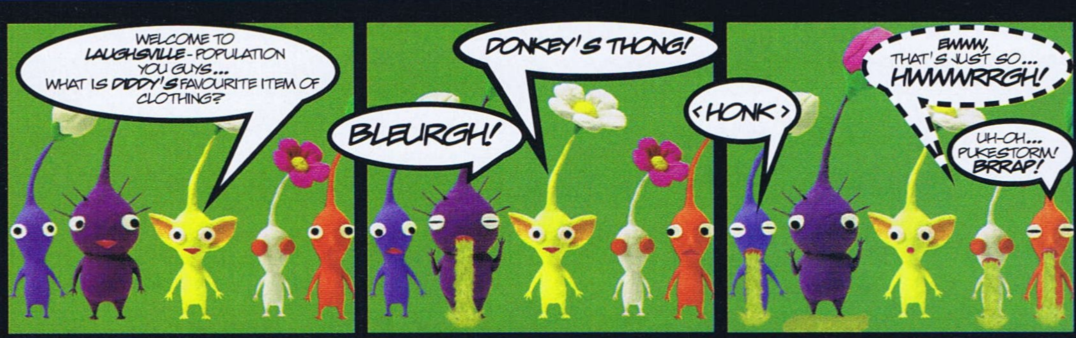
Tiny Tim, via email



***For a guess, that's pretty accurate.* Ed**

GriNtendo!

SEND US YOUR NINTENDO JOKES! MAKE THEM GOOD AND YOU WIN A GAME. MAKE THEM CRAP AND THE YELLOW PIKMIN DIES. HORRIBLY. AND IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT.
THIS MONTH: JOKE SUPPLIED BY GARRICK CLARK





WRITE TO... GRINTENDO, MAILBOX, NGC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK

robbed, and I wouldn't use it at home. Why play games on a small screen when you can play on a big telly? There's no point – console gaming rules, and even the DS can't compete with that. I only use a Game Boy when I go on holiday, so I'm not going to waste £100 on something I'm only going to use for two weeks per year.
Steven Crossley, Bury

***Shigsy would be crying into his sushi if he ever read that. And you'll be missing out on one of the Best Things Ever if you don't play* Advance Wars Dual Strike. Ed**

"The sword"

I am a devoted Zelda fan and have been loving the videos and screenshots for the *Twilight Princess*. The only thing that concerns me is the sword that Link will use in this game. In the earlier movies shown during E3 2004, the end of the trailer showed the Zelda logo featuring the Master Sword. The recent trailer given out on DS carts at E3 2005 only features the wolf.

Will the Master Sword make an appearance in this game? How can Link hope to defeat Ganon – if he is indeed the final boss – without the Sword of Evil's Bane? Please investigate this and print it in the magazine if you manage to find out anything.
Jon Staddon, via email

***Keep it to yourself, but I've been told that Link will be using a special Wolf Sword, made of fur with a bone in the middle.* Ed**

"Almost cried"

When I heard that the Revolution was to be released at an undisclosed time in 2006, I almost cried. Surely Nintendo would have learned by now that earlier is better when it comes to releasing consoles? The relative failure of Gamecube in the UK, which has led to it being consigned to just a handful of shelves at the back of most videogame stores, is clearly a result of its late release.

I know of countless people who turned away from the Gamecube towards the PS2 simply because of the number of games available, then moved onto Xbox when there were a few more games available on that. And yet Nintendo is making the same mistake again – with the Xbox 360 due for release around Christmas 2005 or very early 2006, and with the Playstation 3 presumably coming along shortly afterwards, both of Nintendo's nemeses will have a good few months racking up titles and sales, overshadowing the Revolution.

These few months could spell the death of the Revolution before it is even released. While discerning connoisseurs no doubt agree that Nintendo has the lion's share of high-quality, exclusive or first-party titles (Metroid, Zelda, Mario etc), the majority of the public wants games, and lots of them, on shelves. By releasing late, Nintendo is harming itself more than its child-friendly image or lack of marketing could ever do.
Owen Jones, via email

***I called Sega to ask how launching Saturn and Dreamcast earlier than PS1 and PS2 helped them, but I'm afraid they just wept for a couple of minutes, then hung up. So we'll never know for sure.* Ed**

"Cool I found"

Here's something cool I found while roaming the streets of Bath. Now if I'm not mistaken, that's a Goomba.
Tom Lambert, Bath

***It's the official Nintendo rustbucket!* Ed**



SO TELL ME THIS...

Your questions answered by the NGC throbbing brain.

1. Which is the best Mortal Kombat on the SNES?
2. Is Super Street Fighter 2 better than SF2 Turbo? I've heard it's a little glitchy in comparison to Turbo.
3. I have Mario All Stars, Mario World, Mario Kart and Starwing. What other SNES games do you recommend?
4. Am I the ONLY one excited about Sin & Punishment being downloadable on Revolution, albeit by parting with some hard-earned cash?
Robert Zwetsloot, via email

1. Probably MK II.
2. General opinion is that* Super SF2 *is the better game.
***3. You could try* Super Tennis, Super Bomberman 2, Zelda *and* F-Zero.**
***4. Nobody knows exactly which games will be available on Revolution. Write to Nintendo to request the brilliant* Sin & Punishment.**

1. When are we going to get different colour DS hardware on sale in Europe? I want a Graphic Black one.
2. In issue 108 you said that Michel Ancel is currently working on the King Kong game. Do you think he will ever make any more Beyond Good & Evil games, as the first ended on a bit of a cliffhanger.
Stuart Wybrow, via email

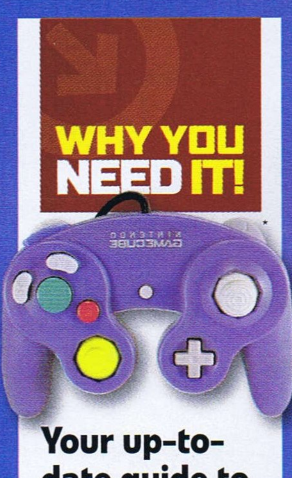
1. There's still no news at the time of writing, but I'd expect something to happen close to September's PSP launch.
2. If he is, then it's a very well-kept secret. The first BG&E didn't shift that many copies, so a sequel won't be high on anybody's priority list.

Will a copy of Mario Kart DS from America play online over here when they set up the European online play facility? My US copy of the Metroid: Hunters demo doesn't seem to play multiplayer with the European version.
Rory Glynn, Ireland

Cart-to-cart link-ups don't usually work between different regions, but playing online is a different matter altogether. Games such as* Phantasy Star Online *allow you to play against people from all over the world – in fact that's the main selling point of the online experience, so it's almost certain that DS will work in exactly the same way.



WHY YOU NEED IT!

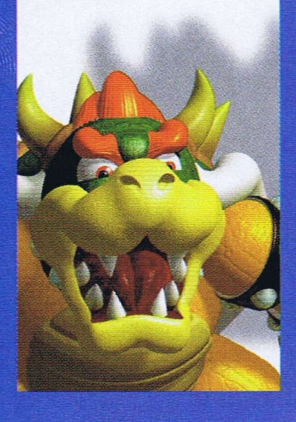


Your up-to-date guide to the hottest PAL titles.

Games aren't cheap. Even when you buy pre-owned games, it's still a bit gutting to get your bargain treasure home and find you've splashed out on a box of gaming garbage. Hence this buyer's guide – it's got:

- **The 100 top-scoring games, listed in score order so you can begin with the very best.**
- **We tell you which issue it was reviewed in, so if you want to know more you can look through your back issues. You *do* have them, don't you…?**
- **A brief description of the game, so if you don't have that issue you can find out the most important points about it.**
- **Highlighted games, with a little more detail. As games join the list, the highlights will change!**

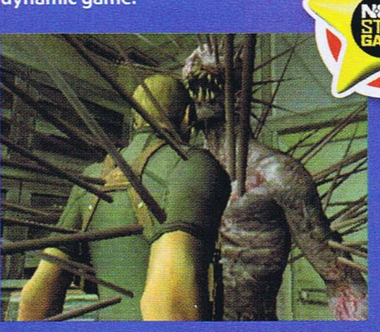
* Backwards pad supplied by Odnetnin Ltd…

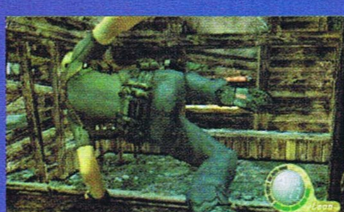


1 RESIDENT EVIL 4 — 97

CAPCOM ■ NGC/104

What, no zombies? What's going on? Something spectacular, that's what. This instalment takes the Resi series to the next level, with an unprecedented level of innovation. Gone are the three day long animations of doors opening and in comes this new, far more dynamic game.









2 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA THE WIND WAKER — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/81

The babbling of the internet whingers faded to a stunned silence when this hit the shelves. It's as exquisitely fashioned as a Disney feature film and doesn't lose any of the gameplay for it. Some sailing sections spoil it a bit, but this is as close to art as games have got.







3 METROID PRIME — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/76

Looks absolutely incredible and there's no slow down, despite the huge, incredibly detailed environments. The action is varied and the puzzles are mind-bending. One of the finest games you'll ever play.



4 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE 96

NINTENDO ■ NGC/73

Yet again Mario shows other platform 'heroes' how it's really done – in stunning 3D, with responsive controls and an engaging story (about vandalism and poisonous brown slime). Plus a giant water-filled squirty backpack. You need one of those… *(who writes this nonsense? Ed)*







5 METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES 94

NINTENDO ■ NGC/101

Another outstanding outing for Samus Aran as she switches between dimensions to save the Luminoth from the Ing. The story is enriched by the logs you find, and Samus has useful new weapons and abilities. The landscapes aren't as varied and awe-inspiring as *Prime's*, but that's our only complaint.



6 MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!! 93

NINTENDO ■ NGC/88

Crazy courses littered with Chain Chomps and pick-up boxes, weapons from slippy bananas to green shells, giant Yoshi eggs, and all your favourite Ninty faces doubling up to race recklessly. The AI's a bit cheaty (a shell *just* as we're about to win? Hmm…) but it's a whole lot of fun.







7 F-ZERO GX 92

NINTENDO ■ NGC/85

This is a blisteringly fast racer that manages to keep up the pace without getting framerate jitters. You will never accept glitchy graphics again. A few more tracks would have been nice, but with editable vehicles (in addition to the 30+ that come with the game) and a Story mode, why complain?



8 PIKMIN 2 92

NINTENDO ■ NGC/99

Louie, Olimar's assistant, has proved less than efficient at managing the business. Happily, it means they've had to return to Earth for a longer session of collecting treasure. They've got two new types of Pikmin to help them out, too. Bigger, better and even more enjoyable than the original.







9 SOUL CALIBUR 2 91

NAMCO ■ NGC/85

Excellent, fast-paced fighting. Weapon Master mode is your key to unlocking the eight hidden characters, but the real star of the show isn't hidden. Namco have dropped in Link for the Gamecube version, complete with bow and arrow. It's the best fighting game on *any* system.

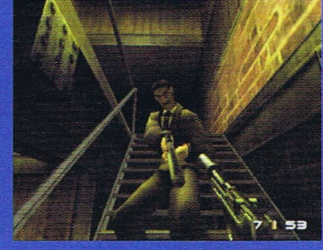


10 TIMESPLITTERS 2 91

EIDOS ■ NGC/73

Travel back through time on the trail of the nefarious 'splitters. This means shooting things. Your weapons are time-zone appropriate, you'll wage war everywhere from the Wild West to the near future and you will love every minute. The multiplayer is the icing on the cake.





TOP TEN GBA GAMES



1 ADVANCE WARS 1 & 2
Cute-looking turn-based strategy, with a frighteningly addictive, super-challenging core. Honestly, it's better than it sounds. *AW2* is essentially *Advance Wars 1.5*, but it's tweaked to perfection.

2 WARIO WARE
Imagine the simple graphics and gameplay of Game & Watch fired at you in five-second bursts. Loopy fun that you'll keep returning to.

3 MARIO & LUIGI SUPERSTAR SAGA
An RPG with puzzle and platform elements, starring our two top plumbers.

4 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST
One of the most memorable outings for Link (alongside *Ocarina of Time*). Comes with bonus *Four Swords* multiplayer adventure.

5 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2
This tweaked version of the SNES classic boasts a massive game world and some of the tightest level design ever.

6 POKÉMON RUBY & SAPPHIRE
The same structure as before – catch 'em all, send 'em into battle – but still the most entertaining RPG out there…

7 MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT
Nicks the best bits from the SNES and N64 versions, and if you've got four friends, GBAs and cables, they can play too.

8 METROID FUSION/ ZERO MISSION
Everything that has ever made *Metroid* great can be found in these two games. A sprawling environment littered with enemies and an imposing difficulty level.

9 HARVEST MOON
A slow burner, *HM: Friends of Mineral Town* is a farming/charming sim to die for. It'll last you for months.

10 STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3
An incredible conversion of one of the best fighters ever. Massive single-player and a brilliant two-player.

DIRECTORY

The best Gamecube games around

11 SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/68

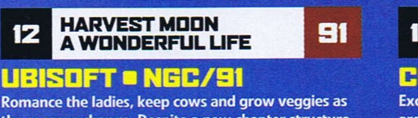
All your Nintendo favourites get together for a phenomenal ruck across a whole range of game worlds. Think Samus could beat Mario? Or that three Jigglypuffs are better than one Link? You'll have massive amounts of fun proving it, by yourself or with friends.




12 HARVEST MOON A WONDERFUL LIFE — 91

UBISOFT ■ NGC/91

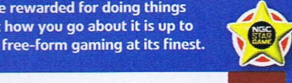
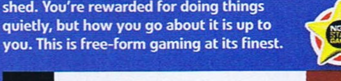
Romance the ladies, keep cows and grow veggies as the seasons change. Despite a new chapter structure, this farm sim loses its way a little when you've got your bride and has few new goals apart from hybridising crops, but you'll keep returning to do a bit of milking…



13 HITMAN 2 SILENT ASSASSIN — 91

EIDOS ■ NGC/82

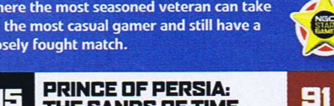
Bald, barcoded assassin 47 comes out of retirement and takes on the bad guys with a range of weapons. Not bad for a bloke who spends his time in a shed. You're rewarded for doing things quietly, but how you go about it is up to you. This is free-form gaming at its finest.

14 MARIO POWER TENNIS — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/104

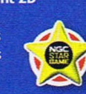
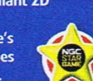
If you stick with it and learn the ins and outs of the power shots, you're left with an incredibly tactical game. It levels the field, making it a game where the most seasoned veteran can take on the most casual gamer and still have a closely fought match.




15 PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME — 91

UBISOFT ■ NGC/90

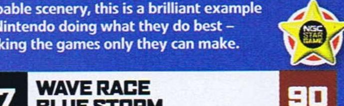
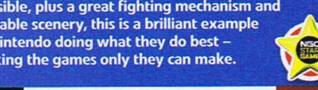
Ubisoft show other developers how to update classic games without ruining them, as the brilliant 2D platformer gets transformed into an outstanding 3D platformer. Maybe there's too much fighting, and maybe the puzzles are too samey, but it all reeks of quality.

16 PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND-YEAR DOOR — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/100

With Mario's papery ability to fold himself into a paper plane or turn sideways to become nigh-invisible, plus a great fighting mechanism and rippable scenery, this is a brilliant example of Nintendo doing what they do best – making the games only they can make.

17 WAVE RACE BLUE STORM — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/67

A few tiny framerate problems hamper the PAL version of this aquatic racer, but it is still a fabulous game. It's convincingly speedy and it looks wonderful – the water effects will leave you staggered. The controls are intuitive and effective. In short, this is absolute magic.



18 VIEWTIFUL JOE — 90

CAPCOM ■ NGC/84

Some people love the unusual looks, some people hate them. Either way, get past the cel-shading and this 2D-yet-3D beat-'em-up impresses. Elements like speeding up and slowing down time during battles only adds to the feel. It can be frustrating, but you'll love it anyway.

19 SECOND SIGHT — 90

CODEMASTERS ■ NGC/97

Excellent psychic stealth-'em-up. Who are you? Why are you here? All will be revealed – if you survive. The levels are tightly designed, offering scope for replay, while its distinctive style and original touches make it one of the most memorable games we've played in years.

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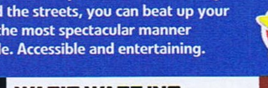


METAL GEAR SOLID THE TWIN SNAKES — 90

KONAMI ■ NGC/91

This is a superb stealth/action adventure with a healthy pedigree. A great story combined with revamped graphics make this old Playstation title blossom on Gamecube. The voice acting and music are superb. There are some problems: the long cutscenes, it only takes a day to complete and there are too many bosses. We're just picky, though, this is a really, really good game.

21 BURNOUT 2 — 90



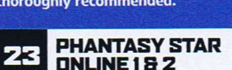
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80

The best realistic racer on Gamecube. It looks great and it's wonderfully fast. Then there are the crashes… When you've had fun roaring around the streets, you can beat up your car in the most spectacular manner possible. Accessible and entertaining.

22 WARIO WARE INC. MEGA PARTY GAME$ — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/97

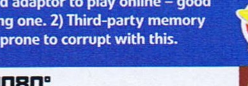
A quickfire succession of hilarious five-second minigames are blasted at you and up to three friends. With tasks like nose picking, cat poking and banana peeling, it's original, outlandishly quirky and very good fun. This comes thoroughly recommended.



23 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE I & 2 — 90

SEGA ■ NGC/78

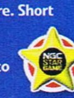
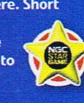
This online RPG will devour huge chunks of your life. Get ready for lots of menu screens, numbers and bashing crates. Note: 1) you'll need a broadband adaptor to play online – good luck finding one. 2) Third-party memory cards are prone to corrupt with this.



24 1080° AVALANCHE — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/89

More of a racer than a trick-based snowboarder, although jumps, spins and flips are all there. Short courses and a fair bit of pace keep things feeling tight. The time trial modes are the best bits – Gate Trial will have you trying to shave seconds off for months.

TOP FIVE PLATFORM GAMES



SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
This is a tour-de-force of everything that good gaming should be. An absolute delight.

PRINCE OF PERSIA THE SANDS OF TIME
An innovative time-rewinding twist and excellent puzzles make this essential.

PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN
Good looking with trickier puzzles and, ahem, more 'mature' content.

LUIGI'S MANSION
Luigi buys a mansion and finds it's haunted. It's a little easy, but you'll enjoy every second.

DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT
Sheer bongos-for-D-pad brilliance.

TOP FIVE RACING GAMES



MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!!
Single-player mode looks as cute as ever, but it's rock hard.

F-ZERO GX
Expertly crafted arcade fun. Really rockets along.

WAVE RACE BLUE STORM
Classic Nintendo action with dazzling water effects.

BURNOUT 2
Fast car racing combined with steel-crunching pile-ups.

EXTREME G 3
The weapons are what make this future racer shine.

25 NBA STREET V3 — 90

EA ■ NGC/104

Think *Space Jam* meets *NBA Jam* meets EA's *NBA Street* and you're pretty much there. For the Gamecube incarnation, EA heaped in a load of Nintendo characters. This is entertaining arcade basketball with all the quirks of Nintendo. What else do you need?

26 ANIMAL CROSSING — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/98

Ever fancied leaving home and living in a town populated by animals? The full cartoon farming experience can now be yours, complete with N64 graphics and strange noises. Somehow it's horribly addictive, as you improve your house, fill the museum and get a life.



27 SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS — 90

SEGA ■ NGC/81

Vast, boat-based RPG ported from the Dreamcast. "It'll change your life" our RPG fanatic assures us. The spaces in between the meat of your quest for some missing moonstones are stuffed with the usual RPG battling, puzzle solving and shopping, although it looks dated now.

28 CONFLICT DESERT STORM 2 — 90



SCI ■ NGC/86

Set during the first Gulf War, this team-based shooter is better than the original *Conflict Desert Storm.* There's a completely new aspect to this one – you're not allowed to let any of your men die, which leads to all sorts of heroics when you try to save your team.



29 WORMS 3D — 90

SEGA ■ NGC/87

You know the score. You have four worms. Your worms must kill other worms. The special weapons are as crazy as ever (Sheep, the Holy Hand Grenade…), but the only real difference is that it's now in 3D, which will affect your strategies for the better.

30



ETERNAL DARKNESS — 89

NINTENDO ■ NGC/74

A Lovecraftian horror that sees you playing as a dozen different characters to fight off a dark, shambling evil. As you see more, your sanity meter falls, and when that drops to the bottom… This is a survival horror that spans twenty centuries of history. It's not another *Resi* clone; there's more to it than that. There are a few weaknesses in the combat, but other than that it's very nearly perfect.

31 LEGEND OF ZELDA FOUR SWORDS — 89

NINTENDO ■ NGC/102

This is an obscure Zelda game that's pretty hard on the pockets – in multiplayer mode, each of the four players needs a GBA and link cable. Nonetheless, it's great fun, very amusing and would have scored more highly if the best bit of the Japanese version – Tetra's Trackers – had been included.

32 RESIDENT EVIL 89
CAPCOM ■ NGC/72
Compelling survival horror. Play as Jill if you want to take things gently, Chris if you're feeling hardcore. Then immerse yourself in this puzzle-solving, zombie-battling frightfest. There's a bit of backtracking and the puzzles are annoying, but they don't hamper it too much.

33 SPLINTER CELL 89
UBISOFT ■ NGC/81
Only Sam Fisher and his various high-tech gadgets – like sticky bombs and camera disruptors – stand between terrorists and the Free World. The 'three alarms and you're out' rule can become annoying. It's the usual stealth-'em-up stuff, but done with a fair degree of flair and polish.

34 CONFLICT DESERT STORM 89
SCI ■ NGC/80
This is a rare breed: a multi-platform release that is about as far from the 'lazy port' title as you could possibly hope. This version has been fully optimised for the Gamecube. *Conflict Desert Storm* is great fun and intensely tactical. The multiplayer is absolutely great fun as well.

35 SSX 3 89
EA ■ NGC/87
Snowboard around one giant mountain, entering races or showing off tricks. Complete all three peaks and you'll get the chance to spend 15-30 minutes tricking your way down the whole mountain. The framerate can be glitchy, and it's not quite as free-roaming as it seems at first, but it's a superb game.

36 DONKEY KONGA 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/99
Drum along to a soundtrack, following the symbols on-screen for left bongo, right bongo, both bongos or clap. It's the sort of game that almost anyone can pick up and play. It's also completely addictive and tremendous fun. Despite the extra bongos costing £20 a set, the multiplayer is worth the expense.

37 PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN 88
UBISOFT ■ NGC/102
The Prince is older and his game's got more 'mature' (so, scantily-clad ladies and smart-arsed comments have been dropped in). It's still great to look at and great to play, with trickier puzzles than the first game, and although the fighting is a bit dodgy, the rest of it more than outweighs that problem.

38 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005 88
EA ■ NGC/98
This is a big game. There are probably lost tribes in there if you play for long enough, but you won't see them if you have other interests, like a job or a social life. More ball control, famous opponents, the ability to create your own golfer, 14 courses (11 of them new)… You can't get bigger or better than this.

39 LUIGI'S MANSION 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/67
The most annoying thing about Luigi's own adventure is that it's TOO SHORT. Apart from that, his escapades in his newly-acquired haunted house play like a combination of *Super Mario World* and Ghostbusters. The man in the green hat has done himself proud with this one.

40 SUPER MONKEY BALL 88
SEGA ■ NGC/67
The first ingenious update of the old classic *Marble Madness*, with encapsulated monkeys rolling around bizarre landscapes, collecting bananas. Minigames include obvious ball games like pool and golf, oddities like a tilting boxing ring and even a monkey version of *Mario Kart*.

TOP FIVE FIGHTING GAMES



SOUL CALIBUR 2
Gorgeous Link-fuelled beat-'em-up from Namco.

SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE
All your favourite Ninty types, pounding each other's faces in: just what we've always wanted!

VIEWTIFUL JOE
Absolutely spectacular 2D-yet-not-2D side-scrolling single player fighter.

DEF JAM VENDETTA
The wrestling game that appeals to non-grapple fans as well.

VIEWTIFUL JOE 2
There's more of the same inventive gameplay, but there are no substantial changes to the successful formula.

TOP FIVE SHOOTING GAMES



METROID PRIME
Tough as nails shooting-heavy sci-fi adventure.

METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES
Samus Aran takes on the deadly Ing in this solid sequel.

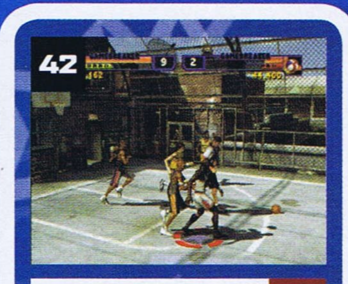
TIMESPLITTERS 2
Classy first-person shooting from the *GoldenEye* boys.

TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT
A great update, though not the revolution that was promised.

STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER
Looks great and the ropy on-foot sections of the sequel are no more.

41 TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT 88
EA ■ NGC/105
This wasn't the revolution that was promised, instead it was just given a bit of a spring clean and a rethink. However, the multiplayer's still explosively good fun, the trademark humour is in place, it's packed with juicy extras and the Story mode is now a lot more cohesive as a single-player game.

42



NBA STREET V2 88
EA ■ NGC/84
This is basketball fitted with EA's successful Street template. You simply don't need a serious basketball sim in your collection – this one is stacks of fun, and unless those real-life stats really are absolutely vital to your enjoyment of a game, *NBA Street* has got everything you need. Three-on-three action, stunt combos and special moves – all this is crammed into an incredibly fun, fast-moving game.

43 DONKEY KONGA 2 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/108
A second chance to wind up in casualty with tendonitis. The songs may be cover versions, the menus may be pretty poor and there aren't enough minigames, but this is more of the same bongo and beats action that we all loved the first time around. Just don't play Solo mode in a crowded room: you'll look like a moron.

44 DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT 87
NINTENDO ■ NGC/103
Get the bongos out, it's time to change your gaming habits. Gone are the days of using the D-pad for platformers, who needs them when you've got bongos? This sounds confusing, but it all makes perfect sense in practice. You'll need a Radox bath to soothe your aching arm muscles by the end of it.

45 MADDEN NFL 2005 87
EA ■ NGC/99
The main change to this instalment is the inclusion of the hit stick, which lets you decide how much physical impact your tackles have. Apart from that and a few tweaks to defensive plays and franchise mode, it's pretty much business as usual, with all the usual stats and player updates you'd expect.

46 DEF JAM VENDETTA 87
EA ■ NGC/82
All your favourite rappers get together to give wrestling games a kick up the booty. Start as a mere rookie and fight your way through the likes of DMX, Redman and Ludacris, then you'll have the pick of the ladies – although their blokes won't be too happy… Need we mention the great hip-hop soundtrack?

47 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/67
Absolutely stinks of PS2 – go on, smell it! – but it's such good fun that it doesn't really matter. You'll find masses of grinds, stunts and a huge range of locations. Come on, this is Tony Hawk – before he got in with Bam Margera and started clowning around in cars. You know exactly what this is like…

48 LOST KINGDOMS 2 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/81
Although nowhere near as good as *Zelda* and *PSO*, *Lost Kingdoms 2* is a beautiful looking card-based RPG – statophiles are going to love building up their decks, collecting new cards to add to it and crunching numbers. It's nicely broken up into a series of small and easily digestible pieces.

49 STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER 87
LUCASARTS ■ NGC/68
Without a doubt the best Star Wars game on Gamecube, both in the way it looks and the way it plays. Take part in the battle of Hoth and whizz your ship down the trench to destroy the Death Star. Note: the whole thing has since been included as a two-player co-op game in *Rogue Squadron III*.

50 VIEWTIFUL JOE 2 87
CAPCOM ■ NGC/105
The sequel to *Viewtiful Joe* is a bit more of the same. There's no revolutionary gameplay here, instead the game seems to take assured and considered steps forward to slightly alter the gameplay and therefore the puzzles involved, although the inclusion of Silvia – the new character – is welcome.

51 BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL 86
UBISOFT ■ NGC/90
Wonderful looking action adventure with you finding rare animals and tackling an alien invasion. The visuals are stunning and the speech and effects make the grade, too. Even the minigames are fun. The world is huge and detailed, but it is slightly easy and it won't last as long as you'd like.

52 FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES 86
SQUARE ■ NGC/91
Multiplayer RPG for up to four players, but each one will need a GBA and link cable, making this expensive if you're to play it properly. The order in which you pick up spells can be a bit random and the players' shared air bubble can be claustrophobic, but all in all this is good looking and ambitious.

53 WARIO WORLD 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/83
Punching, pounding, portly fun. That's fun with a capital F (and U and N). The meths-swilling anti-Mario gets his very own game, and it's every bit as mad as you'd expect. Gather garlic to boost your strength and embark on a (too short) escapade that combines platforming and fighting. Wah-hah-haaaa!

54 BURNOUT 86
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67
This was an absolutely killer racer in its day, but it was massively improved upon by its sequel. Despite the spectacular crashes, inch-perfect handling and smooth framerate, we'd still recommend you buy *Burnout 2*, because it's got all that and so much more. Not that you'd be unhappy with this, far from it!

55 BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG 86
SEGA ■ NGC/87
Bright and bouncy, you'll have the 'la-la-la' theme tune stuck in your head for days after playing this bizarre, very Japanese platformer. Were it not for the annoyingly glitchy later levels and the poor camera, this would be a classic. Who'd have thought rolling an egg around could be so much fun?

56 PIKMIN 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/80
Only Shigsy could have come up with a real-time strategy game set in a garden. Olimar's first visit to Earth is a resource-management revelation. You have 100 Pikmin to carry out your commands as you try to rebuild your ship before you run out of air. It looks as wonderful as it plays, but it's just too short.

DIRECTORY

The best Gamecube games around

57 XIII 86

UBISOFT ■ NGC/88

Unusual graphics, cel-shaded characters and scenes, plus comic-style effects (sequences of images, guns that literally go 'bam'...) set this FPS apart from the gun-toting crowd. Your sixth sense and a bit of stealth help to vary the pace, and when that's all over there's a great multiplayer mode.

58 NFL 2K3 86

SEGA ■ NGC/79

Possibly not as much fun as *Madden*, owing to the amount of work you have to put in to get your 11 bruisers playing together effectively. However, the enormous franchise mode and great sound and graphics make this a decent enough game of American football, if a tad out-of-date.

59 THE LORD OF THE RINGS RETURN OF THE KING 86

EA ■ NGC/87

Orc-slashing, goblin-gutting goodness featuring your favourite film fellowship. With more playable characters than *The Two Towers* (notably, Gandalf is now in the mix), this decent hack 'n' slash takes you from Helm's Deep through to the defeat of Sauron at the Crack of Doom.

60 NBA LIVE 2004 86

EA ■ NGC/88

Underneath the polished EA Sports surface lies the expected, impressively deep layer of substance. The licensed music and players are supported by a strong bedrock of stats, facts and character creation tools. Overall control has been improved and you've got more offensive options. It's soulless but slick.

61 RESIDENT EVIL ZERO 85

CAPCOM ■ NGC/78

Controlling two characters (Rebecca and Billy), you shoot your way through the usual hordes of zombies and monsters, solving puzzles to progress. Great cutscenes and in-game visuals mean this looks a treat, and it's got bags of the old *Resi* atmosphere (a coppery, bloody, fear-filled atmosphere...).

62 MARIO GOLF TOADSTOOL TOUR 85

NINTENDO ■ NGC/95

For a Mario game there's a surprising lack of Ninty-ness in many of the courses – it's just not as wacky as we'd like. And there's plenty of room for sensible in, say, *Tiger Woods*. That aside, it's easy to pick up the controls and the graphics are crisp and shiny. Plenty of modes and unlockables add longevity.

63 IKARUGA 85

ATARI ■ NGC/80

Its toughness is the stuff of legend, even on the easy difficulty. Your little spaceship fires white and black projectiles and you have to shoot the black and white nasties with their opposite colour. There are only five of the well-designed levels, but it will take you a while to see them all.

64 FIFA 2004 85

EA ■ NGC/87

The healthy rivalry between FIFA and Pro Evo continues. This is the best football sim on Gamecube (unless you import *Winning Eleven* from Japan), with around 400 licensed, face-scanned players, teams and stadia. The free kick system's been tweaked, and the corner kicks are now menu-driven. It's all here.



65 EXTREME G 3 85

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67

This is an underrated gem. It's very fast, the tracks are huge, sprawling and well-designed, and you'll find some very cunning uses for the inventive weapons. The only downside to it is that it's a bit soulless and the multiplayer mode is nowhere near as good as it could have been.

66 SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY 85

UBISOFT ■ NGC/106

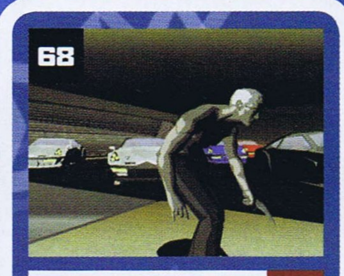
This was the game that was supposed to give the Splinter Cell series a kick up the arse; unfortunately that didn't happen. What did happen was a thorough spring cleaning – the levels are no longer linear, for example – and as a result it feels much fresher. The addition of a co-op mode is also very welcome.

67 SPIDER-MAN 2 84

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/96

How long have we been waiting for a game that actually makes us feel like a superhero? Well, it's here! Freely swinging through an enormous city, you'll actually feel the joy of doing whatever a spider can. It's not detailed and some of the quests and missions get a bit samey, but still... that swinging!

68 KILLER 7 84



CAPCOM ■ NGC/106

Capcom's highly original, inventive and downright weird adventure is certainly an interesting game. You play Harman, the man with a squad of deadly assassins inside his head. You can choose between seven of his different personalities in your quest to defeat the evil 'terrorists' (well, weird invisible blob-monsters), the Heaven's Smiles. So weird you *have* to try it.



69 JUDGE DREDD DREDD VS DEATH 84

VIVENDI ■ NGC/89

Dredd Vs Death sees the famous Mega City One come to life. Sadly, it's not an especially *long* life. While it lasts you get to play as ol' chinny himself: solving crimes, nailing perps and eventually tracking down the Dark Judges. The setting and story are spot-on and the fiddly controls are the only let-down.

70 POKÉMON COLOSSEUM 84

NINTENDO ■ NGC/93

The Pokémon series gains an RPG! Your task is to save the Shadow Pokémon from Darkness and destroy the powers of the people corrupting the poor critters. There's an awful lot of fighting here and you'll need a GBA Pokémon game to get the most out of Colosseum mode. If you're a fan, you'll love this.

71 TALES OF SYMPHONIA 84

NAMCO ■ NGC/100

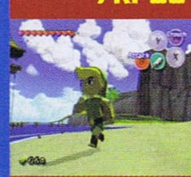
This is very much a traditional RPG, and a very good looking one at that. The characters are beautifully designed and the locations are all, without exception, stunning. The only downer in the visual stakes is the relatively ugly overworld. The rubbish, clichéd dialogue will irritate as well.

72 RAYMAN 3 HOODLUM HAVOC 84

UBISOFT ■ NGC/78

Rayman somehow manages to create a fun platformer, despite the fact that he seems to be stuck in an age when this kind of thing was revolutionary. But it's bright, it's solid and it's got some enjoyable minigames. It doesn't get boring and the difficulty curve is scaled just right.

TOP FIVE ADVENTURE /RPGS



ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
Phenomenal. A reason to own a Gamecube in itself.

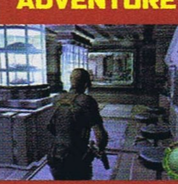
HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE
Not your traditional RPG, this is an endearing, farming treat of a game.

TALES OF SYMPHONIA
A beautiful and epic RPG with the best battle system on the Gamecube.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
A number-cruncher that turns epic with a bit of t'internet.

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
If 'classic' RPGs are your bag, this boy'll be a sackful of joy.

TOP FIVE ACTION ADVENTURE



RESIDENT EVIL 4
Takes the *Resident Evil* series to new heights by cranking up the action.

HITMAN 2
Compelling assassin sim that kills the competition dead.

SECOND SIGHT
Brilliant psychic stealth-'em-up from the team that brought you *Timesplitters 2*.

MGS: THE TWIN SNAKES
Beautifully updated version of Solid Snake's first outing.

ETERNAL DARKNESS
Dark, psychological horror – exclusive to Gamecube.

73 ISS2 83

KONAMI ■ NGC/68

This series was untouchable, but then EA found out and made their FIFA games better. They both ramped up their quality while the GC *ISS* was left behind in their wake. *ISS 2* is a good game, but we were expecting much more of it and unfortunately these expectations weren't met.

74 ROGUE SQUADRON III REBEL STRIKE 83

LUCASARTS ■ NGC/88

Star Wars is all about screaming TIE fighters and taking on Star Destroyers, not poncing around on foot. The on-foot sections are a bit of a trudge and they ruin the excitement of the rest of the game. But it looks and sounds great, and the two-player *Rogue Leader* rules.

75 SERIOUS SAM NEXT ENCOUNTER 83

TAKE 2 ■ NGC/94

Don't be fooled by the name, this is very silly indeed. For a mere £20 you can spend hours gunning down wave after wave of brightly-coloured aliens across a range of historical locations. Okay, the killing can get a bit relentless, but for a bit of blasting fun, Sam's the man. Never mind the depth, feel the speed!

76 BATEN KAITOS 83

NAMCO ■ NGC/103

Role-playing adventure with card-based battles. This game is unique and delivers a wonderful, magical and fantastical world – the stunning vistas, towns and interiors are awash with lavish colours. Even the card system works well. Unfortunately it is let down by some stilted and painfully wooden voice acting.

77 FREEDOM FIGHTERS 83

EA ■ NGC/86

Although less serious than *Conflict Desert Storm 2*, this is a highly enjoyable squad-based third-person shooter. Many of the levels interact with each other, so objectives completed or neglected in one mission will affect the events in another. Forget the serious side, this is pure fun.

78 FIFA 2003 83



EA ■ NGC/75

After many years of yearly statistic and ever-so-slight gameplay tweaks (and the resulting criticism), this was the turnaround for the FIFA series. After having the football crown stolen by Pro Evo, EA sought to re-establish themselves as the kings of the footie game. The result was a remarkably in-depth, fluid and well presented game of football. This is a massive leap forward from previous FIFA games.

79 TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2 82

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/100

This time the graphics have a more cartoony feel, and Story mode features a lot of Bam Margera. Some bits don't belong in a skateboard game, like driving vehicles and walking. Those bits are rubbish. The rest is great, and includes chunks of the first three games – with a timer!

80 SUPER MONKEY BALL 2 — 82
SEGA ■ NGC/78
If games teach you one thing, it's this: out of balls, monkeys probably carry guns and want you dead. Inside balls (WHERE A MONKEY BELONGS!), the little creatures are an absolute delight. The format is the same as the first in the series. There are new minigames, and over 100 levels.



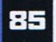
81 METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM — 82
VIVENDI ■ NGC/88
As hard as Ray Winstone in a steel top hat, this robot shoot-'em-up is tough right from the difficult training level. You take control of a small yellow robot called Glitch, and it's your task to defeat an army of robots. The enemies are extremely resilient and have superb AI, so you need to be accurate and quick and you have one hell of an arsenal. The camera can be awkward and landscape hazards are unfairly harsh.

82 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EP III: CARD REV. — 82
SEGA ■ NGC/94
This is a new idea and a new direction for PSO – card-based battling. You now have to choose a side (the Arkz or the Heroside) and do battle with dice and cards. It's best if you are familiar with the original *PSO*, and unfortunately, you'll need a broadband adapter, but if you find one, then this is a decent RPG.

83 THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT — 82
EA ■ NGC/89
Having spent the previous game imprisoned in their own home, this instalment sees your virtual people released out into the real world to work. It still doesn't exactly look brilliant and it doesn't sound too great, but as with all games with no absolute goal or plot, it will last you for a very, very long time indeed.

84 NFL STREET 2 — 81
EA ■ NGC/103
The game that tears up the rulebook and gives you licence to run like hell. This sequel boasts a new ability that allows you to run around the walls Prince of Persia-style to gain height when running, catching or passing a human pile-up. A quality package, though probably without mass appeal outside the US.

85 OCARINA OF TIME MASTER QUEST — 81
NINTENDO ■ NGC/80
This game is nothing short of a bargain. Although the graphics haven't been updated that doesn't mean that the gameplay isn't up to scratch. This version has tougher dungeons and different puzzles from the original *OOT*. Forget the graphics (it's an old game) and immerse yourself in Rinkydink's earlier outing.



86 AGGRESSIVE INLINE — 81
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/72
A top class rollerblading sim. Having wheels that stay attached to your feet when they're off the floor means that you can pull off moves like swinging around lampposts. There's even a Career mode. On the negative side, the soundtrack is rubbish and the graphics are a little bland.

PAUL'S SENSE TALK



SEPARATED AT BIRTH?
"This might just be me, but does Mario remind anyone of Ron Jeremy? While we're there, Lou Albano also bears a passing resemblance… The possibilities are quite frightening."

COMING OUT TONIGHT?
"I thought everybody knew that Thursday is the new Friday."

THAT'S LIFE, LUVVIE!
"You know they say all the world's a stage? Well there's someone out there, and he's got a trapdoor lever, a sheep's crook, and a bag of sand on a rope – just for me."

GOT BETTER PLANS?
"Oh come on freaks. It's almost pub o'clock. We can go get a few shandies down, and I'll fill you all in on the finer points of playing 'Bumpkin.'"

Do you have more 'sense' than our own sense-spewing Art Chimpanzee, Paul? More than likely! So send 'em in. The best get printed, and if you're really lucky, he may send you the results of one of his numerous elephant/hedgehog related experiments. Lucky you!

Send them to Paul at paul.edwards@futurenet.co.uk or to Sense Talk at the usual address.

87 THE SIMS — 81
EA ■ NGC/79
Your Sim has to do all the things a real person would: leave home, make friends, find a partner, eat, sleep and go to the lav. Yet it's all done in a bizarrely addictive way. There's no point to it and there are no objectives, but that's life for you – meaningless, but you want to keep doing it.

88 F1 CAREER CHALLENGE — 81
EA ■ NGC/83
Ever wanted to indulge in the life of an F1 driver? Now you can. This is a part of EA's F1 series, but with the addition of an extensive Career mode. There are a series of trials to prove you can handle the F1 disciplines, then you can get on with the racing part, which looks good, shifts well and handles nicely.

89 NHL 2005 — 80
EA ■ NGC/99
This is a slick, quick game of hockey. The action's quick and the AI and graphics have been improved, but if you dislike the sport there simply won't be enough here to convince you that it's worthwhile. For the fans though, it's easy to learn and you can rack up huge scores. Good fun.

90 MORTAL KOMBAT DEADLY ALLIANCE — 80
MIDWAY ■ NGC/77
The fighting system's been vastly overhauled from earlier MKs, although it's far too easy to get an infinite by button mashing. The lack of ring-outs and stage-specific finishers is disappointing. Still, you've got three fighting styles per character, a ton of unlockables and loads of gore. Best with two players.

91 BALDUR'S GATE DARK ALLIANCE — 80
VIVENDI ■ NGC/81
Endlessly battling goblins and orcs can get a little tedious, but if you've ever played D&D you'll enjoy levelling up and spending your EXP. However, it's a lazy port from PS2, with slowdown and a jittery framerate. Nonetheless, the game still looks a treat despite this problem.

92 PAC-MAN VS — 80
NAMCO ■ NGC/90
This tiny gem is free, but only when you buy another, inferior full-priced title (*R: Racing Evolution*). While *Pac-Man Vs* isn't particularly complex, the four-player mechanic works well. Think of it as a trifle to have fun with between serious gaming sessions. You'll need a GBA and link cable to play it properly.

93 DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY — 80
EA ■ NGC/99
Following on directly from the end of *Def Jam Vendetta*, this is yet another wrestling/rap crossover that will appeal to fans of both genres. The wrestling is slickly executed and there's a massive amount of unlockables and extras to keep you occupied. Unfortunately, it is ruined by a poor framerate.

94 THE SIMPSONS HIT AND RUN — 80
VIVENDI ■ NGC/87
After a succession of gaming stinkers, the Simpsons take a tip from the Grand Theft Auto series and set about stealing cars, taking on missions and doling out a bit of cartoon-style violence. It's certainly not original by any stretch of the imagination, but it is loads of fun.

95 MARIO PARTY 5 — 80
NINTENDO ■ NGC/89
Ain't no party like a Mario Party; except all the other parties in the series. This console-based boardgame is one of the best yet, but is still really only good as a multiplayer game. The board game bits are a little slow and dull, but the minigames (popping other players' inner tubes, mech fights…) are hilarious.

96 DIE HARD VENDETTA — 80
VIVENDI ■ NGC/74
WARNING: Do not play this in earshot of old people; the swearing on display here may offend their sensitive ears. However, there's a fair bit of gunplay, excellent set-pieces and cheesy dialogue. This has plenty of all three, all hampered by cumbersome controls and frustrating sections.

97 POOL PARADISE — 80
IGNITION ■ NGC/92
Not just UK pool – poke your cue at eight-ball, nine-ball and stunt tables too if that's what fills your triangle. Using the analogue stick to power your cue is a nice touch, and darts and *Dropzone* feature as minigames. Earth shattering? No. But it's all solid and playable, as you'd expect.

98 PUYO POP FEVER — 80
SEGA ■ NGC/91
Puyo Pop – if you've never heard of it you must have started gaming all of a week ago. It's quite simple: match coloured blobs that drop from the top of the screen and – hey presto! – they disappear. How radical is that? The two-player mode is a whole lot more fun than you'd think, too.

99 HARRY POTTER & THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN — 79
EA ■ NGC/95
A Potter title that actually works pretty well as a game? Whatever next? The way you use the differing skills of Harry, Ron and Hermione to solve problems adds interest to a rather thin storyline. The controls are a bit iffy, but the atmosphere's spot-on. Not just for Potter fans.

100 NFL STREET — 79
EA ■ NGC/90
American football isn't quite brought to the masses by *NFL Street*. Even though the strategy has been dumbed down it's still very stoppy-starty and so can be slightly drawn-out. We'd also have liked a custom play editor or a wacky training mode to help players get to grips with the basic plays.



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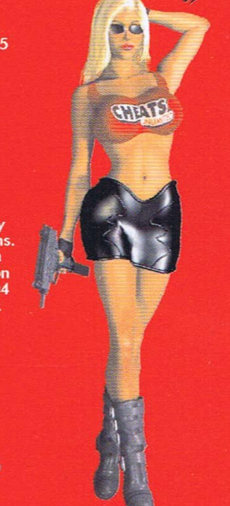
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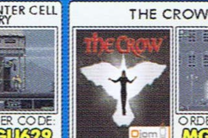
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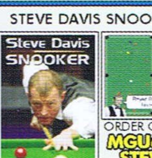
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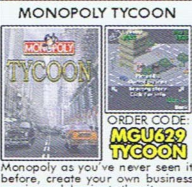
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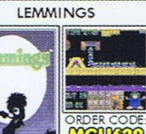
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